stink in the nostrils

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stink in the nostrils

by murdertrout

Summary

Secret Omega Hannibal is not pleased that he has imprinted on Will Graham. He avenges himself on his biology by getting Will Graham put behind bars. But when Will figures out what he's been hiding and tampers with his suppressants, triggering his first heat, they both get more than they bargained for. Alternate S2b if it were entirely A/B/O porn.

Notes

This is entirely self-indulgent Omega!Hannibal porn and is thrilled to ignore all the questions about what A/B/O society would look like! Slightly non-standard dynamics include an element of alpha compulsion that might not be everyone's cup of tea.

Chapter 1

Before Hannibal can even look up at the rumpled brown-haired man in glasses, studiously avoiding eye contact, he catches the scent. It's unlike anything he's ever smelled before. It makes his mouth water. It's keen and sharp and exquisite; he wants to lick it off the edge of a knife. He can feel something in him shift, and he thinks, first, *Alpha*. *My alpha* then, *No* .

It's the thing he thinks every time he looks at Will Graham: first, instinctual, desperate, *Alpha*, and then, clammy, rational, *No.*

And then he watches Will Graham shoot Garret Jacob Hobbs, ten times, blood splattered all over those defensive glasses, and he thinks, relieved, *Oh*. *Alpha.*

But the relief quickly subsides into frustration. Rationally, this cannot happen. He is surprised his biology is sufficiently strong to imprint on anyone after decades of suppressants. But to obey its absurd, demeaning commands would be... unthinkable.

Still, the want surprises him. It's hot and unpleasant and coiled in his belly like a new intestine. He wants to ask asinine questions. *Is he this beautiful to all of you*, he wants to ask. Is it this delightful and endlessly fascinating to you, what he will do next, what he will say next? Are there reasons for you to think of him when he's not there? Do you feel flayed open when he smiles? Do you want to see him covered in blood, do you want to feel his teeth bared against your throat? Does he constantly prey on your thoughts? Do you want him to see you?

He has never experienced this before, this desire to stop mid-sentence, drop to his knees, and present. It's bestial, incomprehensible. It feels as though it was intended for someone else.

Rationally, he hates it. He wants to be rid of it. To cede so much dominion over himself is infuriating. He has always stood aloof from his biology. This will not interfere. Even if the sensation itself is – temptingly exquisite.

No. He will— take from Will Graham what Will Graham has taken from him. Systematically. He will poison his mind and he will take his freedom and he will force him to look in the mirror and be startled by what he sees. He will leave Will Graham just as defenseless as Will Graham has left him. It is just and right.

When the doors of the BSHCI close behind Will he thinks, good. Finally. Safe. Will recognizes his hand in it. It doesn't matter what Will recognizes. He's free of him. He did not let the omega in him get the better of him.

But then he feels the ache. There is an ache associated to being without him. It is worse than the ache of his presence.

And every time he visits the BSHCI he feels Will Graham watching him. Will Graham's eyes on him. Will Graham, hating him, rethinking everything, seeing the slow-motion smashing of their friendship and rewinding the film and watching the bits fly together. He thinks he can

see it, the moment it clicks into place. The moment Will looks in his eyes and thinks, *Omega?* The whole room around them goes still. Will's caged. There's nothing he can do. But a wondering smile slides up across Will's face. Hannibal looks at him, at his burgeoning expression of triumph, and thinks, *Alpha.*

Then, *Earn it.*

*

"Does anyone else know?" Will asks, when the door of the visitation room shuts. "What you are?"

"What am I?"

"I know you're the Chesapeake Ripper," Will says. "And the copycat. I know what you did to me. To – Abigail. I mean, does anyone else know the *other* thing?"

"What other thing?" Hannibal asks, placidly. He tries to keep from looking away. It is strange to have to resist the urge to look down in submission. He had better increase his suppressants, he thinks. Or maybe there is something about being confined in the zoo-like settings of the BSHCI, all cages and bars and no comforts, that makes Will seem more strongly *alpha* than usual. That makes it harder to think around him. That makes the animal instinct predominate.

"I'm sure Dr. Chilton would be quite surprised," Will says, a glance at the camera. "To know you're holding out on him."

"What am I holding out?"

Will leans back in his chair, takes a pointed sniff.

"You smelled me," Hannibal says.

"Yes," Will says. He shuts his eyes, as though he's savoring it. "I can smell you now, Dr. Lecter."

"Oh," Hannibal says, calm mask of indifference firmly in place, as something shifts within him. There is a faint prickling sensation that suggests that if it were not for the suppressants, he would have slick leaking down his leg. "What do I smell like?"

Will snorts. "Brimstone," he says. Hannibal can't repress the faint sign of amusement that crosses his face.

*

When he next visits the BSHCI something is immediately the matter. Everything smells stronger. The alpha guards give him a look. Almost like revulsion. He can't interpret it.

He settles behind the table with the crime photographs to wait for Will. When Will enters he watches his eyes fall shut just a second and then flick immediately open. And then Will is

looking at him, deliberately, pointedly, almost hungrily. He feels something loosen inside himself. If he didn't know better he would know immediately what this is. And then he knows.

He is absolutely meticulous about his suppressants and there must be something the matter. He is absolutely meticulous about his suppressants and this simply cannot be happening. He is absolutely meticulous about his suppressants.

"Dr. Lecter?" Will asks. It's hard and a little cold, closed to him. He wonders if Will can smell the fevered waves of panic on him.

He looks up, tries to look unperturbed.

"Dr. Lecter," Will says, "are you going into *heat*?"

Hannibal looks at him. He's biting his lip shut around the things that want to escape from his mouth. It feels like a Pandora's box of irretrievable evils. I can't possibly be, he wants to say, but he is terrified that what will come out is, *alpha.*

"You are," Will says. Something undefinable flickers across his face, Hannibal tries to memorize it; rapture and then horror in swift succession. "I can *smell* it on you," Will says. Then smiles. The smile is satisfied, predatory, new. Something Hannibal has only pictured before. "You must hate this, Dr. Lecter. To lose control of yourself, to be reduced to something... bestial by a sweet fever eating away at your brain. It's not how you'd ever want to be seen, is it?" Will's voice is a low, dangerous rumble. "*Omega?*"

Hannibal tries with everything that is in him to resist making the sound he makes next, the low *pleased* rumbling in his chest and throat. He tries to observe the sound dispassionately as it escapes him. *So this is what it sounds like when you purr,* he thinks. *Fascinating* . The low thrum of want is louder now, more difficult to hear his thoughts over. He can feel slick starting to run down his thighs. It's really happening. The suit is going to be ruined. He must leave this visitation room now, his mind thinks. Now, now, now. But everything in his body is rebelling against it. Leave? When *he's* here? Your *alpha* ?

Will looks a little startled by the sound Hannibal has produced.

"You'd better go, Dr. Lecter," Will says. "*I'm* not much help to you in my present state." He gestures at himself with his manacled hands. He looks unaccountably pleased. No. Accountably.

"You did this," Hannibal breathes. His voice sounds unfamiliar to him. He has the small miserable satisfaction of watching Will freeze at the sound of it.

"Did I?" Will asks. "I'm behind bars, Hannibal. Thanks to you. I don't have agency in the world, do I? How could I possibly have?"

"You're clever," Hannibal says, has to clamp his mouth shut around the *alpha* that wants to follow it. "There would be ways. You tampered with them, somehow. You wanted to reduce me to this. And now you have."

“Pity for you, then, that I’m stuck here,” Will says. It’s strange watching Will scent him. He watches Will give into it for a second, test the bonds of his handcuffs, before catching himself. “And not out there, where I could assist you.”

“You believe I would want your assistance?”

“I believe,” Will says, and his lip curls a little, showing teeth, “that it’s the only thing you want, omega.” *Oh,* Hannibal thinks. *He’s perfect.* The word is supposed to be demeaning but it sounds *right* in his mouth, like an admission, an allusion to a secret world already opened between them.

Hannibal notices now that Will is not sitting but coiled, poised to strike.

“You’d better go,” Will says. “Leave before you make a spectacle of yourself, presenting for me right here on this table. It smells like your suit’s already ruined. And you’ve got to walk out past the orderlies and guards smelling like *that.* ”

“Like what?” Hannibal just manages to ask, and he wonders if Will detects in his tone the triumph at having asked it, at having seen the opening, even as he can feel the slick starting to gather on his inner thighs and the sweat beading at his temples. Will has played this a little too well. He has not let go quickly enough.

“Like.” He watches Will swallow. “No one’s idea of Heaven.”

“Not yours,” Hannibal says, his pants are uncomfortably wet, he can see that Will is impressed, begrudgingly, by his composure.

“No,” Will says, and there’s something feral in his smile; he rises from the chair and strains against his restraints to press his nose against Hannibal’s neck, his vulnerable throat, and Hannibal *lets him*. He inhales deeply; Hannibal can feel the tickle of his stubble, that his nose is cold. It prompts another uncontrollable gush of slick. “Not mine.”

“But I could be,” Hannibal says, quietly. “*Alpha*.” It feels transgressive out loud. It feels like the filthiest word he’s ever said. The admission. The possibilities. It’s like the first time he tasted human meat.

Will *growls*, low and warm and possessive, in his ear. “Don’t say things you don’t mean,” he says. “It would be impossible, even if I wanted to touch you. Or… taste you. I’m handcuffed to this table.”

“I thought you were an alpha,” Hannibal says. He tries to make it run cold in his voice, but it comes out like a whimper. He didn’t think himself capable of such a pitiful sound. Will looks discomfited by it, and not un-aroused. He can smell the arousal, he realizes. It’s like Will’s ordinary smell, but sharper. Concentrated. Honed. He hears something metallic snap. The handcuffs, he realizes. And then Will’s up on the table, on his knees, pulling Hannibal in by the forearms, mouthing at the juncture of his neck and shoulder.

“I told you,” Will says, “don’t say things you don’t mean.” Hannibal is aware of a low, satisfied rumbling sound. Then he realizes he is its origin. That he is purring. He buries his

face in Will's neck, where the scent of him is strongest, inhales. It's perfect but it's not enough. He is aware of a growing ache of emptiness.

"Alpha," he murmurs. Murmur is the wrong word. It's an animal noise, low and only intelligible in context. He is starting to be frantic. He is not touching Will in enough places. He slides a hand down the back of his own pants and his fingers come up dripping with slick. He presses them into Will's mouth and Will sucks, thirstily, desperately. Like he can't get enough of the taste. It's perfect but it's not enough.

"Hannibal," Will whispers. It almost sounds reverent.

"Knot me," Hannibal breathes, and Will grabs at his belt and starts to tear.

He is only dimly aware of footsteps beginning to move towards them. Orderlies. There is the sound of alarms and shouting and he feels hands on him, dragging him back. Hands on his — on Will. Will snarls, breaks the grip. He looks absolutely feral. Hannibal has never wanted anything as badly as he wants this. He struggles against the orderlies holding him. "Alpha!" he cries; it sounds wretched. Will howls, actually howls, in response, knocks off the orderlies again, is on him again, it's a relief, like sinking into cool water, like ice breaking on his tongue, and then they manage to pull him away, he's zipped uncomfortably into his own skin. Everything feels itchy and hot and wrong and empty. It's the worst thing he's ever felt. He whimpers. Will bites the orderly. They muzzle him. Will is excruciatingly beautiful like this, vicious, terrifying, barely restrained. *Alpha*, his brain chants, *alpha*. Hannibal bites ferociously down on a high, desperate, undignified whine.

The next orderly has a sedative ready.

After that it comes in flashes.

Someone puts a blanket around his shoulders. An orderly. A beta. He's in an office. Slowly, he comes back to himself. His pants are unsalvageably soaked. His mind feels fogged. He is so empty it's painful.

"It's going to be all right," Chilton says, unreassuringly, from what feels like a long way away. He toys with his cane. Hannibal is shaking. Under the blanket he still feels cold and hot and wrong. "Fortunately, we were able to separate you before things got too far, so no harm done."

"Fortunately," Hannibal spits.

"I must confess," Chilton says, "I'm a bit surprised by *you*, Dr. Lecter. Perhaps I should be hurt to have been thus far so entirely ignorant of your biology. You are a rarer find than anyone guessed. If you are still in the market for – more, ah, eligible alphas." He twirls the cane. Waits.

"Frederick," Hannibal says, "fuck off."

"Frederick, fuck off"" Chilton parrots back. "You're rude when you're in heat, Doctor. Though… " Chilton fixes him with a look. "I have a distinct recollection of you *begging* for

Will Graham's knot. Will Graham, the *copycat* killer." Chilton frowns. "Perhaps I should be flattered that I'm not, after all, your type."

*

He's not sure how exactly he makes it home. He only knows that he does.

The heat is excruciating. He feels reduced; he feels empty; he feels so unsated that he might burst. He thinks only of Will the entire time the heat lasts. Think is too civilized a word. He is drunk and half-deranged on the possibilities of their bodies. On the memory of Will's growl. On the feeling of Will's mouth against his neck. On Will's mouth around his fingers, lapping at his slick. On Will's vicious protectiveness as he was hauled off, howling. It all coalesces into a deep-seated throb of want *want* want. He tries to take refuge in his mind palace but the whole place smells of Will. It is a miserable, humiliating three days. But he takes consolation in the thought that Will provoked it. He takes consolation in the second thought that Will was not unmoved by it. He thinks of Will biting the orderly. It's good but it's not enough. He vows never to spend another heat alone. He has never felt so vulnerable before. It is terrifying to want. It is frightening to be so open, to have someone lodged so deeply, even in his hiding places. He hopes no one will ever see him like this. No. He hopes Will will see him like this. That last hope is the most terrifying thing of all.

Chapter 2

The murder that frees Will is simple, straightforward. Elegant, almost. Hannibal is just emerging from the thick fog of heat, and it is more keenly thrilling to kill than it was before. There are more sensations, but he is capable of assimilating them. He wants them all. And even through the sharp bright clarity of satisfaction at his own ability, there is a new counterpoint, the desire to be seen. The desire to show Will. The desire to be seen by his *alpha* . There is something dizzily exhilarating in the feeling that he is doing all this for someone. He suspends the guard's body and cannot suppress the thought, *I hope he likes it. I hope my alpha likes it.*

He feels the same as he ever has. But — more. He thinks of Will's teeth in the orderly's shoulder and the metallic snap of the handcuffs breaking and he feels a terrifying flutter of hope. It is as though he has been holding a string his whole life and trying to forget that he was holding a string, and he has just felt a tug on the other end. It was a mortifying vulnerable feeling to look at someone and think, *my alpha* , but the thought that Will could look back even for a moment and think *my omega* — leaves him flushed with possibility.

He thinks of the sonnets of Dante. They had said 'omega poet' and he had thought the phrase insulting, but — who had better captured the feeling of such a great heaving of your heart out of your chest, of the miserable joy of surrender to it? Yes, he thinks, eat my heart, eat my heart. If only he wants to eat it, it will be paradise.

He affixes the final fly.

Heat is as good an alibi as any. A few hours later when his doorbell rings he mumbles and whimpers his way to the door, stands in the doorway with lowered gaze asking Jack to repeat every question three times, all apologies and bewildered deference. Finally Jack gives up.

*

"Dr. Lecter," Abel Gideon says, at dinner; the meat has never smelled so good. "You've *changed*."

Hannibal blinks affably at him as he carves. "So have you."

Gideon smiles miserably at him. "But it was your choice to change, and that makes all the difference."

"Not so," Hannibal says. "It was a gift."

*

His doorbell rings. He feels presentable again. He is dressed, he is coherent, he is everything he was before. Except – one thing. The new suppressants still sit in their bottle, the seal unbroken.

It's Alana. He wonders how she will have changed, when she looks at him.

"How are you?" Alana asks. He can smell more acutely now; her scent is extremely pleasant. Pleasant, but diffuse. There's no edge to it, no sharpness; it's frustrating, like a surface on which it's impossible to get a grip. But it's a good smell, nice. Bottled, it would sell in malls. He watches her scent him. There's the faintest flicker of disgust before she stifles it and smiles, too much, too kind. She works hard to keep the pity out of it but doesn't quite succeed.

"I feel… relieved," Hannibal says.

"Still a master of understatement," Alana says. She hesitates. "I was going to bring you – soup, or something, but bringing you food felt a little like taking coals to Newcastle."

"Newcastle appreciates the intention nonetheless," Hannibal says, smoothly. "Will you come in? I was just making coffee."

"Your coffee is hard to resist," Alana says. She follows him into the kitchen.

"Cream, no sugar?"

"Of course you remembered." She accepts the proffered glass coffee cup, sniffs it gratefully. Hannibal is reminded of the concept of the nosegay, a barricade between the nose and the varied and suffocating odors of the world. "You aren't back on your suppressants," she says, forced casual.

"No," Hannibal says. He waits for her to look at him. "In a way," he says, "I find that I am grateful to Will. He gave me an experience I may not otherwise have had."

"Grateful? He humiliated you," Alana says.

"That was his intent, certainly," Hannibal says. He sips the coffee. "Yet during the course of my heat I found myself reflecting upon the idea of the contrapasso. It features prominently in the works of Dante. To each transgressor, a torment, appropriate to his transgression." He looks at her over the coffee. "Has the orderly Will bit recovered?"

"That he wound up being affected doesn't excuse--" Alana starts.

"I am not making excuses," Hannibal says.

"Sorry." She makes a gesture of surrender. "I won't keep hammering away at this. But you do know better than anyone that after something like this, it is okay not to be okay, Hannibal."

"If I may ask," Hannibal says, "how much detail about the incident has Frederick felt the need to inflict upon our colleagues?"

"Too much," Alana says.

Hannibal hums thoughtfully. "His instinct has always inclined towards rudeness."

“I know. Jack knows. Uh. Jack’s – seen the footage.”

“Have you?”

“No!” Alana says. Her indignation layers over her scent somehow, flattens it. “That would feel like a violation. I wouldn’t.”

“Jack did.”

“As a beta,” Alana says, strained politeness, “Jack felt differently about it.”

“Jack rang the doorbell here,” Hannibal says, casual, “during my period of indisposition.”

Alana bristles. “I have told him what I think about that,” she says.

“Was there a murder?”

“One that alibied Will.”

“Ah,” Hannibal says.

“I don’t forgive him, Hannibal,” Alana says. “You don’t have to, either.”

“Forgiveness is more complex than a simple choice,” Hannibal says. “It happens, or it doesn’t. Besides, on the whole, some things have changed remarkably little. On some days I notice the constants, on others, the variables.” Hannibal smiles, he hopes, disarmingly. “You are a constant, Alana.”

Alana’s nose wrinkles. She tries to school her expression. “Of course I am,” she says. It is kind of her to want it to be true.

*

It is very satisfying to frame Dr. Chilton for the Chesapeake Ripper murders.

“Oh,” Frederick says, when he sees Hannibal looming in his doorway. “Oh God.” Then he laughs. “Of course I wasn’t your type! Of course!”

Chilton’s fear smells exquisite. Like a fine wine. Far better than his underlying scent.

*

He doesn’t dare to believe it when he smells Will in his office. He is not sure he can withstand such proximity.

When he sees Will standing in the waiting room he stiffens.

Will has gotten a haircut. He's wearing a new shirt. But his scent is intoxicatingly the same. Only without the suppressants it is like having a front row orchestra seat to music that he has had to overhear before with his ear pressed to a door. *Alpha* , it sings, trombones and trumpets and violins and kettle-drums. *Your alpha.* It is overwhelming. He feels once again the horrible twinge of exposure.

"Will?" he says.

Will turns. "I'm here to resume my therapy," Will says, calm, smug. Then he can see Will catch his scent.

Hannibal had never thought of their being power in his position. He had only thought of the compromise, the vulnerability. But he sees the way Will's face changes when he catches it. Sees Will's frustration that he is not unaffected. Smells the edge of Will's scent beginning to sharpen.

Oh, he thinks. Good. This will be interesting.

*

"What do I smell like?" Hannibal asks. He looks across his office to the chair where Will is seated now, arms folded, the picture of composure.

Will hesitates. Then takes a long, slow, showy sniff. "Off-putting."

"Not to you."

"To anyone," Will says. "Doctor Lecter."

"Ah," Hannibal says, "we've resumed the honorifics, then."

"What would you prefer I called you?" Will asks, and Hannibal watches the next possible word, the one Will used for him in the visitation room, hover on his lips. Will watches him watch it.

"I think," Hannibal says, "any pretext that we do not know one another intimately is foolish."

"We haven't, though," Will says, and Hannibal watches him take another long inhale, wonders if it's deliberate or not. "Known each other intimately."

"No," Hannibal says.

"Your scent's stronger," Will says.

"How does that make you feel?" Hannibal asks. Will snorts. Then ponders the question.

"It makes me feel very... *alpha* ," Will says, looking deliberately at Hannibal. Hannibal's gaze drops deferentially; he tries to make it look deliberate, provocative, rather than instinctive.

The skillful deployment of vulnerability is new to him. At least he has Will's presumption that he is being manipulative to shield him. It is almost reassuring that Will thinks so highly of his control, sees him as more than a mere creature of his biology. If Will knew that something in him scents Will and wants to drop to his knees and *worship,* if Will knew that that something is trying to wrest control of him now— he does not know what Will would do.

"Oh," Hannibal says. He keeps his eyes on the ground. "What does that feel like?"

"What does it smell like?" Will asks.

Hannibal looks up, now. Will is leaning a little forward in his chair. Hannibal inhales deliberately. Will has always smelled sharp, but now it is the sharpness of a knife burning through flesh, with the metallic heat of stage lights, but at the same time too rich to be metal, something like the shiny wood of a Cremona, a Stradivarius. Something from which music is about to issue. Like wine, like blood, like sin. But at the same time sweet, forbidden, like the sun-warmed stone of a walled garden. So much. "It has many notes," Hannibal says.

"Like music," Will says.

Hannibal nods. "Exactly like music," he says.

"So does yours," Will says.

"I thought you said it was off-putting."

"It's— detailed," Will says.

"Detailed," Hannibal says. "Yet repellent?"

"When I scented you in that visitation room," Will says, one corner of his mouth twitching upwards, "it was the worst thing in the world."

Hannibal doesn't quite smile. "Because it repulsed you," he says, "or because it didn't?"

"You should get back on your suppressants," Will says, suddenly. His tone is different.

"Why?"

"This isn't healthy," Will says.

"Be more specific," Hannibal says.

"This... posturing," Will says. "The lowered gaze, the — You playing at being the submissive omega, as if I simply had to ask and you'd let me bend you over that desk of yours right now and lick the slick off your thighs until you were begging for my knot."

Hannibal blinks, just once. He tries not to move. If he moves Will will be able to smell the spike of arousal, the rush of slick that is now trickling into his undershorts. "Why don't you ask?" he says.

“Did you think of me during your heat?” Will says, instead.

Hannibal swallows.

“Dr. Lecter?” Will says, the faintest note of command, and Hannibal’s eyes snap up instantly to meet his, too quick to be anything but instinctual; he isn’t sure who’s more surprised by it, Will or himself.

“Yes,” Hannibal says, simply. They don’t look away from each other. He feels certain that one of them *should* ; it is raw and intimate looking at Will like this. His gaze is scalding. He wonders how his own eyes look.

“You did,” Will says, a little stupidly.

“Of course I did,” Hannibal says, “ *alpha.* ”

“Get on the desk,” Will says. It’s a low growl. Hannibal feels grateful that he doesn’t want to resist; every fiber of his being is desperate to respond to that sound. He gets up from the chair, as deliberate and measured as he can with a thick uncomfortable line of slick running down his leg. He can feel a drop of it trailing all the way to his ankle. *No one has ever seen you like this,* he thinks. He walks around and settles on the desk, arms flat, ass in the air, eyes locked on Will. He knows Will will be able to smell his arousal now. He can see the change in his face when he does, the way his head cocks back, his eyes slide shut, his nostrils flare. He’s beautiful like this. He’s terrifying like this. *Mine* , Hannibal’s lizard-brain starts chanting, and the rest of him agrees.

“I’m on the desk,” Hannibal says. It doesn’t sound coy. It sounds— there’s a whine of supplication in it. Hannibal is grateful again that Will thinks he is in control, that he is doing this deliberately. It is terrifying to hear how much control he has already lost, what a beast he is becoming.

“Very good,” Will says. Hannibal watches him bite down around the next word, the obvious, inevitable word for someone in Hannibal’s position, presenting himself like this. The omission emboldens him.

Everything in him is desperate, pulsing with want. There is a noise his body wants to make, a mortifying, animal noise he has never let anyone hear. He is biting down around it. Now he unlatches his jaw and lets it slip out. It’s a high, pathetic, feral whine, all need and desperation. *Alpha* , it says, *you own me, come and fucking take me.* It’s the kind of noise a dog would make. Will’s mouth falls open.

“Fuck,” Will says, getting up, so fast it’s a blur, “Hannibal, that’s not fair.” And then Will is behind him, scrabbling at the fastenings of his pants, tearing at his belt, shoving them in a pile to the ground, and Will’s face is buried between his thighs, tongue chasing the beads of slick. The rasp of his stubble is unthinkably good. “Fuck,” Will breathes, his voice is changed, “you taste—“ and then Will’s tongue is buried in him, and he makes another noise without deliberating at all.

He notices dispassionately that he is still half-dressed, that even as he is shoving back against Will's face, frenzied for the friction of his beard in this sensitive zone, where he is wet and dripping and *empty* , he is still wearing a vest and his shirt is buttoned. He cannot tell if this makes it more civilized or less; there is something obscene about the desperation of it, the fact that Will is lapping thirstily between his thighs and has not even kissed him. That even this is both too much and *not enough.*

"Alpha," he gasps, and Will moans, aloud, nips him along his sensitive rim.

"Jesus Christ," Will says. His voice is wrecked. "How are you so wet, you're not even in heat. You want my knot?"

"Please," Hannibal gasps. And then Will is up, pressed against him — Will is still almost entirely dressed too, he realizes, feeling the damp front of Will's sweat-drenched shirt press against his back; there would be something intoxicating about his desperation, if he were not so intoxicated and desperate himself. And then he feels Will slide into him and the noise he makes is most certainly not human.

"Fuck," Will gasps, " *Omega.* " And then Will is driving into him; the desk shakes with each thrust; pens on it rattle, the papers slide to the ground unregarded. Will noses along his neck. Where he would bite, if this were the passion of heat— if they were going to bond. Will takes a long, deep, pleased inhale. "God," Will breathes, "you smell—"

"Off-putting," Hannibal says, with his last reserve of conscious thought, sliding forward on the desk, and Will actually nips his throat in retribution. It's bliss. He can feel Will's knot starting to form. It feels impossibly large, and then it feels impossibly larger. He feels hopelessly invaded. And worse, it feels perfectly right. It's excruciatingly good. He thinks, it is unbearably humiliating that nature has dictated I should be in this position, and, if I don't get this again, if I don't have *him* again, I'm going to die. His eyes fall shut. He hadn't realized how close he was, that the tide of want within him had been building to something, and now it crashes over him like a wave breaking. He comes all over the desk with a long, satisfied purr. Within him, he can feel Will's knot twitch with interest, and then he is even fuller than he was before, Will is spending. It seems to go on an impossibly long time. Will nips at his throat the whole while, taunting, perfect, exactly where Hannibal most wants his teeth, but not enough.

Will tries to pull back after the rush of it subsides, but he's stuck now. Both their shirts are drenched in sweat. Will doesn't let go of him. His legs want to give out. They wait together for his knot to go down, listening to their hearts beat in unison.

"Why?" Will asks, finally, as speech and movement again start to become possible.

"Why?" Hannibal asks. "A simple biological imperative, Will."

"It's never that simple with you," Will says.

"Suppose this time it was," Hannibal says.

“You expect me to believe,” Will says, “that you, Hannibal Lecter, look at *me* and your brain switches off, everything in you says, *alpha* , fuck me, claim me.” Will laughs weakly. “Et cetera.”

“Would that be so absurd?” Hannibal asks. “We are just alike.”

“I’m nothing like you,” Will says, snarls, against his ear; it sends a charge through him.

“I don’t find that to be true,” Hannibal says. “You know what you are.”

“You’re not subject to ordinary biological imperatives,” Will says.

“I thought that during your imprisonment you proved quite satisfactorily that I was,” Hannibal says.

“Is that what I proved?” Will asks.

“Is that not what you set out to do?”

“What I set out to do and what wound up happening,” Will says, mouth brushing the ridge of Hannibal’s ear, “were different.”

“You wanted to humiliate me,” Hannibal says, “and I was humiliated. Dr. Chilton watched me begging for your knot.”

“I bit an orderly,” Will says.

Hannibal can’t help the small smile that forms at the recollection. “Yes,” he says. “You were magnificent.”

“What are you doing now?”

“Must I be doing something?”

“Yes,” Will says. He runs a hand through Hannibal’s hair, smoothing it. Then keeps running the hand through it, mussing it again. “I thought you’d go back on your suppressants, after.”

“After you showed me my place,” Hannibal says.

“Are you not going to?” Will asks. His fingers dig in, pleasantly.

“What incentive do I have?” Hannibal says.

“I don’t see you voluntarily ceding so much control,” Will says. “You’re not a creature of instinct.”

“No,” Hannibal agrees. “But perhaps we must both become more intimate with our instincts, Will.”

Will notices his hand stroking through Hannibal’s hair, withdraws it. “So you’re going to smell like this all the time?”

“Possibly,” Hannibal says. “If I continue in this way. What do I smell like?”

Will nips his neck again. “The worst thing in the world,” he says. “Haven’t you guessed?”

*

“He’s trying,” Will says, watching his line in the water, “I don’t know, some sort of, omega entrapment. I don’t understand the game he’s playing.”

“Are omegas capable of entrapment?”

“Hannibal’s capable of anything,” Will says. “Omega or not.”

“What if this is the one thing that makes him human?”

“He’s not human,” Will says. “Even his scent—“

“What does he smell like?” Jack asks.

Will blinks down at the hole in the ice. “Have you heard of the corpse flower?”

“Opens once every ten years, smells awful, like rotting meat,” Jack says. “That corpse flower?”

“To some,” Will says. “It smells awful to some.”

Chapter 3

The next time he sees Will is at dinner with Jack.

Will shows up trailing behind Jack, avoids eye contact, shoves fresh-caught fish onto the counter, leaves immediately to wash his hands. The fish is lovely, plump and strong; it flakes nicely under the fork. Hannibal feels an uncomfortable new sensation with regard to the fact that Will has just supplied him with fish. There is a moment when he almost reaches for the pill bottle. It is strange to have this unasked-for satisfaction, to feel *provided for*. He likes it but he knows he doesn't like it. He wonders if this is why Will was so furtive about it, because he had the same discomfort, because it felt like a gesture with meaning, something he should do and should not do, at the same time. It is the thought of Will also feeling some way about it that makes him put the bottle back.

"Cheers," Jack Crawford says, at the table. He holds up a glass.

Hannibal looks from Will to Jack and thinks: *he's seen the footage. He's seen us*. But then he looks from Jack to Will and thinks, almost stunned, he doesn't know that there's been more.

"Cheers," Will says, looks up, looks away immediately. Will has been studiously avoiding eye contact all evening. He can smell what he thinks is Will's discomfort. But there's a distinct *edge* to the discomfort. Not an unfamiliar one. It is strange to feel as though they're having a conversation Jack knows nothing about.

"Cheers," Hannibal says, lifting his glass to meet it.

"Smells, uh, delicious," Will says.

"I can take no credit for anything you smell," Hannibal says.

Will looks up at him, almost a warning. His scent is more nuanced than it was at the BSHCI, full of notes to savor. It is thrilling to match them against the twitches of his expression. That hard, sweet scent is Will's indignation, perhaps; that low warmth, his private amusement. "It was my turn to supply the meat."

"Of course the proof is not in the scent but in the taste," Hannibal says. "Have a bite."

Will's look contains enough daggers that even Jack notices. But Hannibal is fascinated by the continuing evolution in his scent. It's stronger, more detailed, with the sharp edge Hannibal knows could keep sharpening and become arousal. Will is trying to look like a door slamming but when he smells him he smells only possibility.

Will takes a bite of the fish. "Delicious," he says. Hannibal watches him inhale and exhale, his satisfaction unmistakable. There's no ill-concealed twitch of revulsion, like he's seen with Alana, like he's noticing now, occasionally, with other alphas. Will luxuriates in everything he is smelling.

“Isn’t it?” Hannibal says.

*

He notices when Jack brings them both to the crime scene on the farm that Will is making a point of standing upwind. He wonders if Jack notices.

“Hello, Will,” he says, polite, distant, as though he hasn’t come on Will’s knot, as though his office doesn’t still smell intimately of their coupling. As though the sight of Will doesn’t shift the tempo of his heart. Will looks at him, nods absently, then away, but he can smell Will’s attention.

When Will reconstructs the crime, his scent *changes*. Hannibal stands riveted. It is exquisite: a progression of scents, theme and variations. The instrument is the same but the melody is different. He wants to shut his eyes and savor it. He wants to drop to his knees and present. His body is alive with interest. He thinks he can smell when Will pictures violence; his scent becomes rich and hot and thick, ripples with power and delight. His range is right for it. Will is the perfect instrument for such great and terrible music. He thinks, *alpha*. His mouth feels dry.

It is strange to be so precisely aware of what his body wants. He never used to look at surfaces and think—that would bear my weight, if he wanted; we could do it there. To think — I could kneel there and he could tilt my chin up and make me take him in my mouth, and Jack would see (then the hot wash of, Jack has *already* seen). To think, I know what it feels like to have him. There is a detailed and obscene geometry playing out everywhere he looks; a Vitruvian man but bent into every possible configuration. It is all the terrifying vulnerability of before, of *alpha* but now his mind is filling in the details of *fuck me, take me*, *claim me*, sparing none of them.

How do people live like this, he wonders. Rationally he thinks, you are new to this, they get used to it. But it is hard to think rationally when a thin finger of slick is sliding down his left thigh. You used to have hobbies, he thinks.

When Will emerges from the recreation he gives Hannibal a look, hot, searing, knowing. Hannibal can’t help glancing at Jack to see if he notices. But if he does he has the decency to pretend not to.

They leave the barn and walk towards the waiting vehicles.

“Are you trying to distract me, Dr. Lecter?”

“Not deliberately, no,” Hannibal says. He looks deferentially down; instinctive, but he is starting to understand why it is instinctive. Will huffs out a frustrated breath.

“*Stop* that,” Will says. Hannibal’s eyes lift to him, obediently, and catch his eye-roll. “That too,” Will says. “Stop acting so— receptive.”

“I apologize,” Hannibal says, mildly. “This is all something of a novelty to me and I must confess that my control is lacking.”

“I could smell you,” Will says. “The entire time I was trying to—reconstruct. You smelled *obscene.*”

“Should I apologize again?” Hannibal says. He keeps his eyes lifted to Will’s; Will bares his teeth at him, possibly unconsciously. They are looking directly at each other.

“This does it for you,” Will says. “Me thinking about killing.”

“More than I was previously aware,” Hannibal says. He feels Will watch him swallow. “It was extraordinary. You were extraordinary. You occupied this killer’s mind and yet even in the midst of it you were utterly yourself. I was privileged to witness it.”

“Dr. Lecter,” Will says, his mouth twists. “That sounds very elevated and academic but I didn’t smell *privileged to witness*. I smelled, *mount me on the nearest available surface.*”

Hannibal lowers his gaze. “Perhaps I am more a creature of instinct than I supposed.”

“*Hannibal*,” Will says, frustrated, and they both catch the slip into intimacy at the same time. Will stares malignantly at him, then he reaches over, touches his chin, tilts it up. It’s a strange echo of the lewder gesture Hannibal had pictured. Their eyes find each other. Will’s fingers are still on his chin. “This omega charade of yours has gone on long enough.”

“You wanted to make me embrace my nature,” Hannibal says, mildly, deliberately. Will is close enough to scent him and he tilts his head, just a fraction, to expose his throat. He watches Will's nostrils flare.

Will takes a step closer. Then another step. He can feel the heat of Will's body. Will’s nose drags along the exposed line of his throat; his nose is chilled from the cold; they both shiver. “You’ve proved your point.”

“Have I?” Hannibal asks. He holds perfectly still; Will doesn’t stop. He can smell something flat and tepid that he thinks is Will’s frustration at himself.

“This has to stop,” Will says, hisses. Will is getting worked up, Hannibal can smell it, the delicious edge to his scent; feel it, too, in the stubborn, incredulous set of Will’s mouth as it brushes suggestively over his neck, as Hannibal stands there and *lets* him. “You’re Hannibal Lecter,” Will says. Will is crowding him. Will’s words are all dismissive but his scent is sharp, fascinated, hot and exquisitely thick. Hannibal catches his elbow through the coat to hold him nearer. “Not some — mindless omega who’s desperate to be fucked.” Will glances up at him, pointed; Hannibal gets a whiff of something new, it smells wiry and green, wrapped around the hot undercurrent of lust like ivy snarled on a tree; *possessiveness*, he thinks, with a jolt. “Even if that is what you smell like.”

“How do you think *you* smell?” Hannibal asks. Will’s mouth is ghosting along the juncture of his neck and shoulder. Hannibal whimpers. It sounds needy and obscene.

“I don’t know,” Will says, almost humorously, “like every second I’m not buried to the hilt inside you is a personal victory?” Hannibal knows Will can smell the response this provokes; the swift gush of slick. Will huffs out a sharp, astonished breath, like he’s been punched.

“A *Pyrrhic* victory,” Hannibal breathes. Will’s stubble brushes along his neck; goosebumps rise in its wake. He feels a hot lurch of *want*. He feels sickeningly certain that Will can smell it. *Please,* he thinks. *Ask.*

“Right here?” Will asks; the movement of Will’s mouth along his chin becomes a bite, soft, but deliberate.

“Will?” Jack asks. “Dr. Lecter?”

Jack is back by the barn, far enough away to not quite see how compromising their position is, but not so far he can’t guess at it.

His voice snaps them out of it. They blink at each other, stunned, as if they’ve just emerged from a tunnel into daylight. He doesn’t let go of Will’s elbow; Will reaches down and unlatches his fingers, with a kind of rough gentleness, one by one.

“Sorry, Jack,” Will calls. “I’ll be right there.”

Hannibal can feel the intense effort it requires Will to take a step back. He doesn’t move. *You would have let him*, he thinks. The rational voice in him is amazed, bewildered. But it is not the only voice. There is another voice crying out with rage that they were stopped.

Will doesn’t move away immediately. He reaches towards Hannibal and runs a thumb along his neck. It feels regretful, like a promise. Hannibal isn’t sure what his face does; he thinks it’s nothing, but Will’s expression, before he turns to walk away, is one of rueful recognition, like glimpsing a familiar face in a holding cell. *They got you too?* the look says.

“You can’t *really* live like this, can you, Dr. Lecter?” Will tosses over his shoulder. Hannibal watches his footsteps recede in the snow. He doesn’t quite smile.

*

“Hannibal still doing that thing?” Jack asks. He sounds a little uncomfortable.

“He is but I’m handling it,” Will says.

“You’re handling it,” Jack says.

Will rubs his hand over his face. “Yes,” he says. “I’ve got things under control.”

“Didn’t look under control,” Jack says.

“I didn’t realize your opinion of alphas was so low,” Will says.

“Your posture,” Jack says, “his posture, did not— suggest control, Will.”

“No?” Will asks, just to be nasty. “What did they suggest?”

“I don’t like feeling like a *chaperone*,” Jack says. “That’s not my job. This is too important. He’s too dangerous. If you—”

“I’m sorry, Jack,” Will says, the indignation is maybe a little too thick, too much, “are you insinuating I’m not able to keep it in my pants around Hannibal *Lecter*? Is that what you think is going on?”

“*Is* that what’s going on?” Jack asks.

“Jesus, Jack,” Will says, “what kind of sick fuck do you think I am?”

“You said yourself,” Jack says, mildly, “he’s playing a game. You might not be as in control as you think you are.”

“I’m in control,” Will says. He looks Jack in the eye. He’s glad to be wearing his glasses.

“Keep it that way,” Jack says.

Chapter 4

“You haven’t gone back on your suppressants,” Will says. “Hannibal, why the fuck haven’t you?”

“You seem agitated,” Hannibal observes. He sounds cooler than he feels. He watches Will pace the office, to the bookshelves and then back to the chairs. He moves like a caged animal marking out the length of his enclosure. “Am I riling you up?”

“You know you are,” Will says. “It’s obvious.”

“Not to me,” Hannibal says.

“You know the effect you have on me,” Will says. “Or do I need to be in full-blown rut in your office for you to be convinced of that?”

“An intriguing and discomfiting image,” Hannibal says.

“You’ve made your point, Hannibal,” Will says. “You can even wield your biology to serve your manipulations. Stop tormenting me with it.”

Hannibal feels something in him go warm at this. “Is that what I’m doing?” he asks. “Then, if I may ask, what are you doing?”

“I’m not doing anything,” Will says.

“Your scent is also stronger,” Hannibal says. “I could also accuse you of wielding your biology as a weapon. Deliberately, to compromise me.”

“My biology?”

“You have the scent of a walled garden to which the gate is swinging open,” Hannibal says. “Stronger all the time and sharper.” He inhales deeply. It’s deliberate, and then it isn’t. “To be around you is an exhilarating torment.”

“Hannibal,” Will says, “don’t.”

“Why not?” Hannibal asks, mildly. “If it’s true?” He lowers his eyes.

“I know who you are now,” Will says. “I know what you’ve done. What you’re capable of.”

“I’m sorry that you believe—”

Will dismisses him with a gesture. “Stop playing that you’re — Look at me.” Hannibal’s eyes snap instinctively up to him. “Not like that,” Will says, “not like I’m your fucking *alpha.”*

“You could be my alpha,” Hannibal says, calmly, directly.

Will runs his hands through his hair. “That’s a terrifying offer.”

“Is it?” Hannibal asks. “Are you terrified, Will? Terror’s not what I smell.”

“Maybe you don’t know my scent as well as you think,” Will says.

Hannibal raises his hands in a propitiating gesture. "It's true."

“I don’t trust anything that touches you to be true.”

“Why don’t you touch me yourself?” Hannibal asks.

“Surely it’s obvious that I want to,” Will breathes. Will stops his pacing to sit down on the edge of the desk. The location jolts a recollection in both of them; Hannibal doesn’t have to be bonded to know what springs into Will's mind when he touches it now. He wonders if Will can still detect the traces of them in the air. He can tell Will's searching for it; his expression changes, minutely. Will runs a thumb over the surface of the wood and Hannibal can almost *feel* it, like a caress. The afternoon light catches his face. He's *beautiful*, Hannibal thinks. Will looks ruefully at him; their eyes find each other.

“What’s obvious to me,” Hannibal says, “is that you haven’t.” He gets up from his seat and moves to sit on the edge of the desk, next to Will.

“I’m not an animal,” Will says. “I can control myself.”

“And if I do not want you to?”

“Hannibal,” Will says, “no. I know – all this – is manipulation.”

“You are certain,” Hannibal says. He doesn't move closer. But he traces a finger over the desk as well. He thinks about it. He watches Will watch him think about it.

“If it weren’t,” Will says, “it would be a pretty sick cosmic joke.” Will leans closer, imperceptibly closer, until he’s nosing along Hannibal’s ear, down the line of his throat, mouth lingering just under his chin. “Me, wanting you this much, for no reason at all.” Will's tongue traces the side of his throat. Where he would bite if he were claiming Hannibal. It’s unbearably suggestive. He knows Will can smell the effect it has.

“I believe God finds our triple natures to be a source of constant amusement,” Hannibal says, holding exquisitely still, trying not to shut his eyes and give way to the sensation of Will’s tongue suggestively lapping *there*. “Yours and mine in particular. Why else should he have devised them to leave us continually torn between the desire to destroy and the desire to possess? God laughs at such bewilderment.”

Will’s mouth stops moving on Hannibal’s throat, nips just under his chin, teeth worrying gently at the mating point. Hannibal whimpers. Will’s eyes flick shut, then reopen.

“Perhaps this is how God requites us for the laughter,” Hannibal says, baring his throat encouragingly.

“You know we *can't* now,” Will says. The *we* is freighted with terrifying promise.

“Not now,” Hannibal says. “Not until—”

“Your heat.”

Will pulls back, doesn't look at him. Hannibal feels as though they are both holding their breath.

“God,” Will says, “this is happening again, isn’t it? We’re going to do it again, right here, aren’t we?”

“You describe it as though it is an event external to yourself,” Hannibal says. “Like a natural disaster. A hurricane, or hailstorm.”

“Doesn’t it feel that way to you?” Will asks. He gets up from the desk, paces, turns back around. “Or do you feel in control?”

Hannibal looks levelly at him. Their gazes hold a quick, silent debate, quickly resolved in the affirmative. *Really?* his eyes ask Will. *Really,* Will’s eyes say. “Shall I get on the desk?” Hannibal asks, calmly.

Will barks out a laugh. Then his expression acquires a certain rueful mirth. "There's also the couch, Dr. Lecter," he says. "If you ask nicely."

“Should I beg?” Hannibal asks. “I will, if you want me to.” He looks up at Will, deliberately submissive. “Do you want me to?”

“*Please*,” Will says. He looks knowingly down at Hannibal. Hannibal feels a jolt of unfamiliar power and unfamiliar vulnerability, as if the ouroboros of control and desire between them is turning around in its bed to get comfortable.

“Please,” Hannibal says, “*alpha*.”

Will sighs. He makes a rueful, amused face. He traces one finger over Hannibal’s lower lip. Hannibal watches him do it. “This is *obscene*,” Will says.

“Entirely,” Hannibal agrees.

*

“Christ,” Will says. Hannibal is panting and sated beneath him on the leather couch, trousers in a ruined heap in the middle of the floor, their lower bodies stickily knotted together. Will’s knot gives another weak, final pulse of interest. “This feels like committing a sin.”

“You have always dreaded the things that bring you pleasure,” Hannibal says, shifting languidly. His body is reluctant to let Will go. “But the dread has made you keenly aware of your desires.”

“I don’t desire—” Hannibal shoots him an incredulous look. Will cuts himself off, properly admonished.

“You are becoming more intimate with your instincts,” Hannibal says, “alpha.” He reaches a hand back to tangle his fingers in Will’s sweat-damp hair.

“I’m *not* your alpha, Dr. Lecter,” Will says, rough. “Anyone who would want to be your alpha, knowing who you are and what you’re capable of – would have to be a monster.”

“And you are not a monster,” Hannibal says.

“You want me to be,” Will says. He shifts his weight. Hannibal can smell something dry and incredulous creep into his scent. “What will you have me doing next, I wonder?”

“You would orphan your own desires and make me their father,” Hannibal says. “Disclaim any responsibility for your own impulses.”

“Isn’t that what our biology dictates, Dr. Lecter? What *won’t* we do to please one another?”

“You know what biology dictates,” Hannibal says, carefully. “Who it says is in control.”

Will laughs, sharp and harsh. “Oh, *I’m* in control? Do I seem in control to you, Dr. Lecter?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “I think it is easier for you to attribute your desires to my influence than to admit that they are your own.”

“You know you’re in my head,” Will says. “That was difficult enough before without smelling what you want everywhere, all over everything.” He takes a demonstrative sniff. Then another, quieter, at the juncture of Hannibal’s neck; it’s almost surreptitious, like he’s hoping Hannibal won’t notice.

“I don’t smell revulsion on you,” Hannibal says. “From others but never you.”

“Pretty fucked of me,” Will says, “isn’t it?”

“I barely smell surprise,” Hannibal says. “I think you are disappointed, when you remember to be.”

“Have I remembered to be?”

“At times,” Hannibal says.

“You’re easier to read now, too,” Will says. He shifts his head so his nose is buried in Hannibal's hair. “Or you want me to think that you are.”

“Am I?”

“You don’t like to be,” Will says. “That much is obvious. You resent the visibility. Like you’ve just been made aware of your own nakedness.”

“Wouldn’t you?”

“I don’t have as much to hide as you do, Dr. Lecter.”

“From you,” Hannibal says, “I have nothing to hide.”

“That terrifies you,” Will says, flat. “You hate it.” Hannibal can feel his warm breath stir at the back of his neck. “But you don’t *only* hate it.”

Hannibal swallows, shuts his eyes. “No,” he says.

*

Peter Bernadone’s social worker Clark Ingram is the first other alpha that Hannibal has seen look interested. He sniffs the air, delicately, when Hannibal enters the room. Hannibal is distracted from the surprise of the attention by the low, feral rumble of Will’s growl from the other side of the waiting room. His eyes snap to Will’s and Will looks immediately away, flustered.

Jack makes an exasperated noise. “Is there a problem, gentlemen?”

Will takes off his glasses, looks directly at Ingram, and then wipes them on his jacket, puts them back on. There is murder in the look. It is exquisite. Hannibal almost doesn’t breathe. “No problem,” Hannibal says.

“Territorial,” Ingram says. “For someone with no claim.”

“I fear so,” Hannibal says, politely, placatingly. He inclines his head just a fraction. He makes a point not to look at Will. He is rewarded with another growl. It’s exquisite, dark velvety thunder. It sounds deadly. He wants to wrap himself in it. He wants to set it to music.

“Will!” Jack says.

*

“Don’t,” Will says, in the car. His voice is still low, gravelly, warning.

“Don’t what?” Hannibal asks. He feels a kind of giddiness. Will’s expression is studiously neutral but Will’s scent is all over the place, fired with indignation and heat, like metal that will scald to the touch. He smells dangerous, hot and quick and trigger-happy. Hannibal feels a trickle of slick. He is momentarily uncertain whether he hopes Will cannot smell it or hopes Will can.

“Fuck him,” Will says.

“Do you really think there is any danger of that?” Hannibal asks.

Will looks pointedly over at him. “There is very little I don’t believe you capable of, if it suits your purposes,” he says, “Dr. Lecter.”

Hannibal’s fingers grip the wheel. “Do you believe, then, that you are the only alpha with any right to claim me?”

Will looks out the window, fidgets in the seat. “Can you crack a window?” he says.

Hannibal does, the minimum amount. It doesn’t help very much. The scent is still overwhelming. Will rubs his temples.

“Does it seem to you that it would be sacrilege if I were to take any other knot but yours?” Hannibal asks, mildly.

“*Don’t*,” Will says. His scent sharpens unbearably. Hannibal wonders if he has ever smelled Will’s desperation before.

“You are becoming more intimate with your instincts,” Hannibal says. “If you witnessed him mounting me, what would your instincts demand of you? Would you protect what was yours?”

“If he touched you,” Will growls. “I’d bite his throat out.” Will smiles, unpleasantly, dangerously. It is, Hannibal thinks, meant to parody a possessive alpha response, but it also manages to be the thing itself.

“I can smell it on you,” Hannibal says. “The resolution.”

“If you can smell that,” Will says, “you can smell how damn close I am to making you pull the car over and mounting you right here.”

“Is that what I smell?”

Will rolls his window the rest of the way down, sticks his head out. “Please just drive,” he says.

“Is my proximity distracting?” Hannibal asks.

“How are you so calm?” Will asks. “I want to *bite* things. You know that. Don’t pretend you don’t know that. You’re doing this on purpose, Dr. Lecter.” He exhales, rubs a hand over his face. “This isn’t who you are.”

“This is who you have made me,” Hannibal says. Will glances over at him. Something in their eyes snags beneath the posturing.

“I did not mean for *this* to happen,” Will says, with a gesture that takes in the car, the oppressive hot suggestive scent that has wrapped them both in its tendrils, that is pulling them ineluctably towards each other. This *want* that has sprung up between them, that is a creature of both of them but obedient to neither, with its own whims and demands.

“Neither did I,” Hannibal says.

“This is driving me insane,” Will says. “The thought of *you*, like *this*. All the time.”

“Like this for *you*,” Hannibal says.

“Or him,” Will says, rough, ragged, “or anyone. It isn’t difficult to picture now that I’ve seen you panting for it.”

“Not only seen,” Hannibal says.

“No,” Will says.

“Touched,” Hannibal says. “Tasted. I’ve come on your knot.”

“Twice,” Will corrects; Hannibal can smell a spark of something almost amused, like Will is observing their predicament from the outside.

“Twice,” Hannibal agrees. He wonders if Will can smell the same dry amusement in his own scent.

“Wouldn’t it be better,” Will says, rakes a hand over his face; he’s sweating; Hannibal wants to taste it on his tongue. “If we didn’t know this about each other.”

“Do you feel regret, then?”

“I don’t want to be like this all the time,” Will says. “Hannibal, I practically *mounted* you behind that barn. In broad daylight. With the FBI right there. If Jack hadn’t come along.”

“How do you think I feel,” Hannibal says, hot knife-blade of a whisper, “knowing that I would have let you?”

“You can’t say things like that,” Will says.

“Imagine how it feels,” Hannibal says, “knowing that if you had asked I would have gotten on my knees right there, in front of Jack.”

“Stop,” Will says feebly.

“In front of the FBI. I have my reputation to consider. My career. My dignity. But if you had asked I would have knelt in the dirt and presented for you. I would have begged for it.”

“Jesus fucking Christ, Hannibal.”

“Does it excite you to know that?”

“I knew that,” Will says. He rubs his face against his palm. “That was the worst part. Knowing how willing you were. How did you manage it?”

“I am not in control,” Hannibal says.

“If I believed that,” Will says, “I’d be terrified.”

They drive in silence. The road unspools before the headlights. He can smell a continuation of the conversation in Will's scent, hints of the things Will isn't saying. Want and frustration and something else vine-like and green looping around it, tangling it together. There's snow on the ground but inside the car it smells like spring. It's too much.

Will fiddles with the center controls, turns the music on. The speakers begin to utter somber piano notes; a melancholy baritone rises over them. Will tilts his head back against the seat rest, looks sidelong over at him, almost deadpan.

Hannibal glances over placidly. "Schubert's Winterreise," he says. "Composed as he was dying. It is said that one must be haunted by it to sing it."

Will shuts his eyes. For a while there is only the road and the music, the throbbing of the piano and the sinuous misery of the baritone. "It affects you," Will says. He sounds surprised. There's a shade to his scent that Hannibal doesn't want to put a name to; petals unfolding, a paper-white sweetness in an iron fist. "I've never smelled what music does to you."

"Music," Hannibal says, "requires no reference to the figurative or the corporeal. It is therefore, of all the arts, the closest to death."

Will hums in acknowledgment. He can feel Will looking at him. The new scent intensifies. He doesn't look over to see what Will's expression looks like. He threads the car through the night, down the road, until their destination looms bulky in the shadows ahead. He pulls in and stops the car.

“Don’t fuck him,” Will says.

“Why?”

“He doesn’t,” Will draws it out, trying to impart irony to it, “—*deserve* an omega like you.”

“And you do?”

Will looks at him. “For my sins,” he says; his mouth twists to make it into a joke but their eyes catch. He can see it in Will’s eyes just a moment, Will daring to imagine it, how it would feel to look at him and think, *my omega.* Hannibal can hardly stand to breathe. Then Will opens the car door and steps out.

Chapter 5

It's dark in the barns.

Peter's building is empty of its animals. The cages are open. There is a certain clear definite smell in the air, acrid and lingering, terror. It leads them directly to a horse carcass, to Peter Bernardone stitching something shut inside it. The scent isn't Peter. Hannibal doesn't think it's the horse.

Will leads Peter away, murmuring reassuringly. But Hannibal can smell the rage on him. It is preceded by a specious calm, as the water on a beach is sucked back before the wave strikes. Building, seething rage at what Peter Bernardone has been coaxed to do. At the destiny that his social worker has created. Rage and a desire to wreak vengeance, to punish him. But it is not *only* righteous indignation that Hannibal smells.

Hannibal lingers by the horse. The smell of terror grows sharper, more pronounced, and then he watches watches Clark Ingram crawl out of the horse carcass, retching, bewildered. He's picked up his hammer by the time he notices Hannibal watching him.

"Doctor," Ingram says, relieved.

"I would get back inside," Hannibal says, "if you know what is good for you."

Behind him he can smell a whirlwind, a cyclone, a prairie fire. Will is approaching with his gun in hand. "Pick up the hammer," Will says. And, oh, Will smells murderous. He smells magnificent. Hannibal's first thought is, *alpha.* His second thought is, *he's actually going to.* It's almost unbearable. He wishes he possessed an equation to freeze time. He smells the usual burned incense smell of Will's righteous indignation but beneath it there is another smell, more alive, more richly suggestive. *See?* it says. *Omega, see? Watch me.*

"Officer," Ingram says. "I'm the victim here."

"I'm not an officer," Will says. "I'm Peter's friend."

"Peter's confused."

"Pick up the hammer," Will says, *growls*. He's going to, Hannibal thinks. He's going to. It's terrifying. It's intoxicating. He can hear his heartbeat in his ears. Your alpha is going to murder him, in cold blood. He feels dizzy with want.

"Will," he says.

"Pick. It. Up."

He can picture Will's finger curling on the trigger, pulling, the hot red spurt of blood. Maybe some of it will get on Will's face. He is almost frightened by how much he wants this. Will, resplendent, limned in red. His alpha. Showing him his splendor. "Peter isn't asking for this."

“You are,” Will says. “I can smell it all over you.” Will squints down the barrel of the gun.

“Please,” Ingram says. “Don’t.”

“You would be wise to remain silent,” Hannibal says, “Mr. Ingram.”

Will’s fingers tighten on the gun, on the trigger. Will’s scent is impossibly strong, thick with purpose and violence, wonderfully sharp. Hannibal can barely breathe. “Do you still want him?”

“I never wanted him,” Hannibal says. “I wanted you like this.”

He reaches for the gun. Will snarls at him. He can see how keyed-up Will is. He can see how it all plays out. The quick impersonal flash from the muzzle, the social worker dropping to the ground with red streaming from his head. The picture is perfect.

The picture is enough. Someone has to think, and no one is thinking; Will is all instinct, snarling, furious, righteous, protective. He tries to place himself between Hannibal and Ingram and Hannibal tries not to let him. Will is not thinking clearly. Will will regret this. Will will disclaim responsibility.

“*Alpha*,” Hannibal says. “Give me the gun.” He reaches his hand over Will’s. The gun feels like something alive between them.

“Why deny yourself?”

“Don’t do this for Peter, Will,” Hannibal says. “Or for me. It must be for you.”

The air around Will hums with fury, like ozone in the air after lightning. There is a moment of exquisite and terrifying clarity. He can smell something sulfuric and jagged, like the tip of a match, igniting into a sharp spike of resolve.

Will pulls the trigger. He catches the hammer.

Clark Ingram collapses, sobbing.

Will lets Hannibal take the gun. His fingers are warm; the touch vibrates on the air between them. He can’t resist taking another deep inhale of Will’s scent, the blood, the heat, the violence of it. He is magnificent. He smells wonderfully vivid, like a stained glass window behind which the clouds have parted for the first time and left it illuminated by brilliant sunlight. Every inch of him breathes danger. Suddenly Hannibal’s mind is empty of reasons to do anything but *present*. He has never wanted to resist an impulse so little. Dimly he is aware that the floor is muddy and blood-covered, that they will be seen, that this is a public place. But over this is the overarching awareness of Will’s scent, more defined and beautiful and protective and *deadly* than it has ever been, and he wants simply to worship. He drops to his knees. Will stares at him in disbelief. So much for the suit. So much for the coat. “Please,” he says; it is almost a whine. “If you wouldn’t mind.”

“Here?” Will says.

“Here,” Hannibal agrees. He is grateful that it feels ostentatiously desperate, that it’s a dramatic enough gesture to conceal the fact that it isn’t a gesture.

“Fuck,” Will says. “*Omega*.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

“How do you always know what I won’t be able to say no to?” Will asks.

“Instinct,” Hannibal says. “Perhaps.”

“You’ll ruin your suit,” Will says.

“It is already ruined,” Hannibal says, pointedly. “Can’t you smell it?”

Will scrubs a hand over his face. Hannibal smells what he now knows is restraint, warring with another, warmer, sharper scent, enveloping and all-devouring, like a prairie fire, that he suspects to be desire. “I,” Will says. Will looks lost for a moment in the scent. “If you really wanted me as much as it smells like you want me,” Will says, “I think you’d go insane.”

“Please,” Hannibal says.

Will growls. He kneels in front of Hannibal, starts unbuttoning his coat. His fingers are steady. He pushes the coat off Hannibal’s shoulders, nudges him to kneel on it. He gets on his knees behind Hannibal, presses along the length of his body and plants a swift warm possessive bite of a kiss at the side of Hannibal’s neck. Next to the horse, something stirs. Clark Ingram is trying to crawl away.

Will’s face twists into a terrible, perfect smile. “Hold the gun on him, omega,” he says. “I want him to watch.” Will is pressed close enough that Hannibal knows he can actually feel the gush of slick that greets this demand. Will’s eyes flutter shut; he inhales deeply. “Fuck,” he says, a low marveling hiss, warm in Hannibal’s ear. He undoes Hannibal’s pants, undershorts, shoves them roughly down around his knees, slides a finger into Hannibal. Hannibal keens.

“You want him to watch?” Hannibal asks, hot-cold rush of lust and something like terror running over his whole body.

“Who’s going to *believe* him?” Will asks. He crooks the finger, then withdraws it, slick and wet. He presses it to Hannibal’s lips and Hannibal sucks without being told. He can feel Will’s breathing change. “I want him to see me mount you. I want him to see you squirming on my tongue and writhing on my knot.”

“Alpha,” Hannibal gasps. It’s more of a whimper than a gasp.

Will nudges Hannibal up onto his forearms, parts his legs, and slides between them. He nips his way up Hannibal’s thigh to where the scent is thickest, buries his nose there, catches each new cascade of slick with his mouth. Hannibal whimpers. He loves Will like this, half-mad with want, stubble scraping the inside of his thighs, wet tongue lapping greedily at him, like it’s ambrosia. He thinks of drinking and desperation in Scripture, in the alpha poets; thinks is

the wrong word, but the phrases come. *Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise everyone that boweth down upon his knees to drink*. He thinks of Rossetti, *all earth's full rivers cannot fill the sea that drinking thirsteth still*. Coleridge. *Water, water, everywhere, and not a drop to drink*. Will's tongue moves deeper; he can feel the firm wet point of it *inside* him; he can hear a choked noise of delight. He isn't sure which one of them makes it. He whimpers. It is absolute dizzy perfection but not enough.

"Knot me," he breathes.

"Yes," Will responds; he pulls back. He looks wrecked; his face is drenched with slick, his curls are awry. It suddenly seems like the most unforgivable sin in the world that Hannibal has never kissed that sweet dangerous mouth, has never felt that stubble against his chin.

Will's nose wrinkles, as if he's picking up the thought.

There is another noise from the direction of the horse. Hannibal turns his head. The social worker stops moving. Hannibal grips the gun, holds it steady on Ingram. He can hear the faint, intimate click of Wilt's belt buckle sliding open, his zipper descending, fabric shifting. Then Will slides into him and starts to thrust. He makes a pitiful, grateful little sound. Will kisses his neck, his cheek, his hair, wet and open-mouthed and still sticky with slick. He can feel the tide of want building, the hot resistless weight of his climax. He should feel cold but he feels burning hot.

"Are you close?" Will asks.

"Yes," Hannibal says. "Touch me."

"You're going to come when I knot you," Will says. "Not before."

Hannibal whines. It doesn't feel put-on. It feels exactly as desperate as he is.

"Show him how good you can be," Will says. "Show him you're mine."

"Will," Hannibal breathes, it sounds like *alpha*. He feels outside himself. His hair is disheveled; his nostrils are full of the metallic tang of blood and the hot steam rising from the horse and fear and above all of it, lavished over all of it, Will, his power, his strength, his desire. The green ductile force of his possessiveness. Will, acting on instinct. Will, taking him, when all he wants is to be taken.

"Tell him how it feels," Will says, hisses in his ear; Will's cock slams into him with a force that is nearly breathtaking; it is all he can do to keep the gun steady. He wants to bury his face in the dirt to stop the things that want to come out of his mouth. This is what you were afraid of, he thinks; that he would open you up and allow people to see what was inside you. But humming under his skin is the hot triumphant thought, he wants to see inside. You're going to be seen now. It's excruciating. He is going to make you feed your insides to him piece by piece.

“Tell him?” he asks, meekly. This is the part that will be your undoing, he thinks. He tries to find something to cloak the raw feeling with. Poetry, or scripture. Dante, or Donne. *Batter my heart, three-personed God.* Something raw yet not quite his own so he can feel less exposed. *For you as yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend.* Something that will be true without letting Will see how deep the damage goes, how completely owned he is. That Will could do anything to him.

“Yes,” Will says, with a nip to his throat. Will thrusts home; Hannibal has to brace himself on his elbows; it is too good, too much. He can feel Will’s burgeoning knot. “I’m asking, *omega*.” Hannibal bites his lip, but he can’t contain the words; he wonders if Will can smell the mixture of rational terror and instinctive arousal that accompanies the discovery that he is *going to do what his alpha wants*.

“You could do *anything* to me,” Hannibal says, and winces at the sound of it; behind him, Will goes still, just a moment, then his arm finds purchase around Hannibal’s waist, draws him up and back onto his knot. Will is deeper now, knot sliding against a spot that makes Hannibal’s vision go white with ecstasy; his thrusts become shallower as the knot expands.

“Go on,” Will hisses. He punctuates the command with another thrust and Hannibal makes a half-animal sound. He can feel Ingram’s terrified eyes on him. Watching him be claimed and taken. It should be degrading (*look how owned you are*) but it feels powerful instead (*look how owned I am, look how he owns me*.) It feels right.

“I *want* him to see us,” Hannibal breathes; the admission stuns him a little; his own voice sounds strange. “I want him to see everything you do to me.” It feels strangely lewd; there are no higher words for the sentiment. “How entirely you possess me.” Will growls. It’s music. It’s impossible. He feels wild. He bares his throat. “Bite me,” he hears his voice saying; it sounds desperate, wrecked; he wants to stifle it; he tries to turn his face so the words will stop; Will inhales sharply behind him; his hips go temporarily still. “Please.”

“I can’t claim you,” Will says.

“You don’t have to claim me,” Hannibal hisses, the words feel blurry and slurred with want; “Just want to feel your teeth in my throat.” He feels feverish. It feels almost like his heat, the terrifying *compulsion*. But Will is here. Will’s scent is thick and hot in his nostrils; Will’s knot is growing inside him; Will’s arms are holding him. Will is the abyss into which he is sliding and Will is the thing holding him back from the abyss. Will tugs at his collar; then he curses and tears at it. It comes open. The air on his skin is sharp and cold. Will’s mouth on his neck is warm. “Please,” Hannibal gasps, *begs*, and Will *bites* the juncture of his neck and shoulder. Not gently. It’s ecstasy.

“*Hannibal*,” Will breathes. He can feel Will’s knot swollen inside him. “Come for me.”

Hannibal does, instantly, untouched. No. Not untouched. Will’s voice in his ear, low, commanding, is as good as a touch. He can feel the sticky rush of Will spending in him. Will spends a long time. Will has wrapped both arms around him; his nose is buried in his shoulder. He can smell blood on Will’s mouth; his *own*. *Perfect*, he thinks.

“*Perfect*,” Will says. Hannibal feels it shudder through his whole body; his cock feebly tries to spend again. He collapses back onto Will. His eyes are wet. He feels exhausted. He whimpers. The sound doesn’t feel strange; it simply feels like an accurate expression of his emotional state. Will nuzzles his shoulder, gently, over the bite mark. “You were so good,” Will says. Will sounds like he doesn’t believe it. “Dr. Lecter,” Will says, strangely formal with his nose shoved into Hannibal’s neck, his stubble sticky with Hannibal’s slick and his blood, their bodies still knotted together. “I never thought you could be so *good*.”

That I may rise and stand, Hannibal thinks, *o’erthrow me, and bend your strength to break, blow, burn, and make me new*.

“I feel a new appreciation for the Holy Sonnets,” Hannibal breathes. He lets his eyes stay shut. He feels loose and unmoored everywhere except where their bodies are still linked. To surrender so much is terrifying. But to have been *good* for his *alpha* — it feels strange and small when he thinks it, but the feeling is more than he has ever experienced. He feels hollowed and broken and made new. Will doesn’t stop holding him.

“Except you enthrall me,” Will whispers, into the messy bite on his neck, “never shall be free.”

Hannibal nods. He reaches up and tangles his fingers in Will’s hair, to keep his mouth *there* just a moment longer. “Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.”

Will laughs, like he’s spilling over with emotions and there’s no other way for them to escape. Hannibal can feel the laughter in his most intimate places, where they are still knotted. Will noses softly at the place where his teeth have left marks, catches a sluggish trickle of blood on his tongue. “I don’t imagine that was easy for you, Dr. Lecter.”

“Please,” Hannibal says. “Not when we’re like this.”

“Sure,” Will says, “omega.” He knows Will can feel the spasm of renewed arousal that hits, a tiny aftershock of slick. It feels almost too intimate.

“You *want* me to,” Will says, incredulous, rubbing his face along Hannibal’s neck, over the bite; it feels primal, a claim, like he’s rubbing his scent into it. “Call you that.”

“It,” Hannibal says, he can choose whether to say it or not, he finds with alarm that he wants to, “feels nice when you do.”

“Jesus Christ,” Will says. Hannibal can feel his shrinking knot give one more exhausted pulse. Hannibal shudders again; he can feel the cold now, creeping in. “Hannibal, I hope you know what you’re doing.”

“So do I,” Hannibal says.

Chapter 6

“What the hell are you and Hannibal doing?” Alana asks.

Will grimaces at her. “I’m barely doing anything."

“That’s bullshit, Will,” Alana says. “I saw him this morning and he smelled like you. He had a *bite mark* on his neck.”

“Which,” Will says, “he made no effort to conceal.”

“You’re taking advantage,” Alana says, starting to walk. Will stumbles after her.

“I’m taking advantage? To what end?”

“He’s vulnerable,” Alana says. “And from the looks of things you’re on him every chance you can get.”

“If I didn’t have to be,” Will says, “I wouldn’t.”

“You have choice in the matter,” Alana says.

“Not where Hannibal is concerned,” Will says. “You think because he’s an omega he’s not Hannibal any longer. But he’s Hannibal, Alana.”

“Jack might believe you,” Alana says. “But I’ve smelled him, Will.”

Will pauses mid-step. “What is that supposed to mean?”

“It’s not a pleasant scent.”

“To you,” Will says.

“To anyone,” Alana says. “It’s like a slaughterhouse.”

Will doesn’t say anything. “In the rain,” he says, finally, ruefully. “You forgot the rain, Alana.”

“You’ve hardened your nose to it,” Alana says.

“Alana,” Will says, miserable laugh, “do you really think that’s biologically possible?”

“Then why do you think it’s biologically possible for him to be — entrapping you.”

“Because it’s Hannibal,” Will says. “There is nothing he can’t do.”

“Do you really believe that?” Alana asks.

“I have to,” Will says. “What’s the alternative? That I’m really *his* —” he tries to make it sound ironic, it sounds wheedling, desperate, “*alpha*, that he’s my, I don’t know what, omega, can you imagine Hannibal loving me? It’d be like being loved by—smoke. By a prairie fire. Something primeval. And what kind of monster would I have to be to — want him, or, or, love him, to not want to rip him apart, when I know what he’s capable of? And what kind of monster would I have to be to want to rip him apart, if he loved me.”

“You’re not a monster,” Alana says.

“Hannibal thinks I am,” Will says. “That’s why he wants me.”

“You’re wrong about him,” Alana says.

“Oh, I know I’m not wrong about him, Alana,” Will says, miserably cheerful. “He’s my omega.”

*

Hannibal stares at the bottle of suppressants. This has to stop, he thinks. You are not in control. This is changing you. Your choices are altering your physiology and your mind is not unaltered by them.

He observes the situation dispassionately. You got on your knees for him in the middle of the barn, where Ingram could see. He saw. He saw what you are becoming: someone’s omega, willing and desperate and begging for it. He saw you being taken; he saw you raw and open and claimed.

Not claimed, he thinks. He touches the bite; pleasantly deep, but wrong, at the wrong time. Still it feels like a promise. He strokes his finger over it. It could scar, he thinks. If you weren’t careful. He is being careful. He is treating it properly. But there is something exquisitely distracting in having the shape of Will’s mouth marked into his flesh. *His alpha’s mouth.*

Alana had been horrified. Her indignation still lingers in the air.

He tries to be chilly and rational about it. What makes you certain he is yours? What has he done to earn you? You are letting him change you. This thing is growing between you and you are not in control of it. How do you know he is not deceiving you? And deeper, more frightening than that: does it matter if he is?

The vulnerability is strange. He still feels unsteady in the world, barely controlled. It feels like walking around without a skin. Everything is too much, too vivid; he feels uncomfortably seen. Music is almost unbearable. He feels marked. He feels wild. There is something primal and hungry and as large as he is that he must wrestle now, all the time, to keep still, to keep his mind his own. He sees Will and scents Will and his body and his mind conspire to betray him. He thinks, I want him. He thinks, *my alpha.* It is miles worse now that he has the sense-memory of Will’s chest pressed to his back, Will’s tongue on the inside of

his thigh, Will's teeth against his throat; now that his body knows the pleasant ache of being stretched on Will's knot. It feels impossibly right. *Alpha,* he thinks. *There is no limit to what I would do for him*, he thinks.

But he hasn't claimed you, he thinks. You don't know if he's going to.

But, oh, he thinks, he *might.*

He had always thought the prospect of the claim demeaning. But he did not know then what it signified. That someone might see you and know you and still want you. It feels tantalizingly, terrifyingly possible.

He puts the bottle back.

*

"Don't know that Mason would have agreed to send me to you if he'd known you were a fellow omega," Margot says. She looks from the window to Hannibal.

"His misconception would have been your loss," Hannibal says, smoothly.

"Yes," Margot says. "He thinks all omegas are in cahoots."

"I have not found that to be the case."

"Well, you're a late bloomer," Margot says.

"Is it so obvious?"

Margot nods. "I used to get that distracted when I was just starting out. So many different smells. Some pleasant. Others not so pleasant."

"What were the pleasant smells you noticed?"

"Horses," Margot says. "Certain people. What were yours?"

Hannibal tries to think of the first time he cooked after he went off the suppressants, of the startling discoveries of new flavors, subtler and more exquisite, breaking on his tongue. But it is not the first thing he thinks about, not really. Instinctively he thinks of blood and dirt and Will Graham, the new and wondrous depth of his scent; violent, sharp and hot and *alpha*. Of the sensation of slick trickling down his thigh. Of Will's mouth, wet with it. "Cooking," he says, "has become an experience of an altogether different order."

"*Cooking*," Margot says. "That wouldn't have been my response."

"You don't cook," Hannibal says.

"I don't cook," Margot says. "It's always been something people do for me."

"I take pleasure in it," Hannibal says.

“It seems like a chore,” Margot says.

“It is,” Hannibal says, “until it becomes an art.”

“Practice makes perfect.”

“Precisely,” Hannibal says. “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.”

“That seems to be a refrain with you,” Margot says.

Hannibal nods, acknowledging it. “You are on suppressants now.”

“Didn’t have anything keeping me off them,” Margot says. “Too much vulnerability for Mason to exploit.”

“I believe it is a mistake to see our natures as merely a vulnerability,” Hannibal says.

“Not sure I have the luxury of finding out.” Margot frowns. “I can’t afford to act on instinct.”

“Your instincts suggest killing Mason.”

“I’m lucky I didn’t,” Margot says. “Papa’s will was very clear. In the absence of a legitimate male heir, everything goes to the Southern Baptist Church.” Margot smiles cheerlessly.

“Our natures offer us more than simple instinct. They contain the possibility for connection,” Hannibal says. “For the securing of a legacy.”

“I don’t get a legacy,” Margot says. She stares into the middle distance. The hot smear of Alana’s indignation still lingers on the air, like the residue of a scented candle. Hannibal wonders if she smells it.

“Not unless you make one,” Hannibal says.

*

There is blood in the snow, ragged bits of bone and hair, and something about it feels familiar. This is the work of someone who has cast off all the trappings of humanity and given in utterly to his instincts.

Will will be made uneasy by the analogy, Hannibal thinks. He will look at the flourish of red and thinks, here is the carnage wrought by someone who has stopped fighting his impulses. Who has simply begun to do everything he wants to do. Hannibal knows how easily Will can picture surrendering to instinct. He has the marks of it on his neck.

That is not what Hannibal thinks when he looks at it. Little Randall, he thinks, amused, entranced. All grown up.

He supposes he had better tell Jack.

*

“Do you still think about killing me?” Hannibal asks.

“Sometimes,” Will says. He crosses and uncrosses his legs. His scent is strong today. “It’s no longer the *first* verb that springs to mind.”

“Mm,” Hannibal says. “When do you think about killing, then?”

Will swallows. Hannibal watches him swallow. His scent hones itself until Hannibal feels he could cut himself on the edge of it. “When I think of anyone else touching you,” Will says.

“How would that feel?”

“Righteous,” Will says.

“Would it have felt righteous to kill Clark Ingram?”

Will ponders it, eyes shut. Hannibal can smell the shift in his thought. The heat of the barn. It is strange watching Will luxuriate in the recollection. Strange but good, almost unbearably. Will’s eyes open and look defiantly at him. “Yes,” he says. “Why didn’t you let me?”

“I wanted you to be sure,” Hannibal says. “When you do it, it must not be for me, but for yourself.”

Will looks at him. “Couldn’t it be both?”

“Fulfillment of your nature and satisfaction of mine.”

“I know you want me to,” Will says. “I can smell your brain short-circuiting.”

“What does that smell like?”

“Sweetbreads,” Will says.

Hannibal smiles, honestly, pleasantly surprised. Will grins back. These little unaccounted-for moments that have nothing to do with their biology are so strange; sometimes Hannibal is more terrified by them than by the others. The hot desperate tide of *want* that catches him when Will is in his nostrils is different from this sprig of zest. This almost surprises him, every time, the quiet voice in his mind that says, *oh*, *I want him. Oh*, *perfect*.

“I will make you sweetbreads,” Hannibal says.

“I hope you aren’t expecting me to supply the meat,” Will says.

“Not yet,” Hannibal says.

“You think I will want to,” Will says.

“I think you already do,” Hannibal says. “But I am not asking.”

“An alpha provides,” Will says. Their eyes snag for a hot moment and Hannibal thinks, he *does* want to. He can smell the usual sharpening of delight, interest and then a swift chilly jab

of something else— horror, shock, self-awareness.

Hannibal lowers his gaze. “In ancient Sparta,” he says, deliberately, “an alpha began his courtship by bringing his omega the corpse of a rival.”

“Barbaric,” Will says, but his scent says otherwise.

“But potent,” Hannibal says.

“An eloquent gesture,” Will agrees.

“Can you imagine making such a gesture?”

“I can imagine it too well,” Will says.

“What do you imagine?” Hannibal asks.

“Would I be making it to anyone in particular?” Will asks. The corner of his mouth twitches upward. It’s funny to be able to smell when Will is being intentionally obtuse to get a rise out of him. Will’s actual confusion smells muddy, like a watercolor. This smells precise and dry, like a flower being presented in a vase carved from bone. It smells like flirtation. Hannibal inhales the scent and doesn’t smirk. “Are you asking me to court you, Dr. Lecter?”

“If that is the gesture that occurs to you.” He can smell Will’s amusement at the deflection.

Will leans back in the chair, deliberately casual. “You’re just waiting for me to drop an unworthy alpha’s corpse on your doorstep like a dog depositing a squirrel carcass.”

“A singularly unpoetic analogy,” Hannibal says.

“An unpoetic desire,” Will says.

“No poetry in the act itself?”

Will shakes his head. “It’s brutal. Instinctual. An exercise of power. The poetry comes later.”

“Tell me,” Hannibal says, “how would you kill him?”

Will looks directly at him. Hannibal can feel Will’s eyes on him like a physical touch, tracing the point just above his collar where the livid bruise from his bite is still visible. “With my teeth.” The words feel like a caress. He knows Will can smell his own response, the hot gush of slick the words provoke. Will licks his lips.

“It is natural,” Hannibal says, “to kill in this way.”

“Is that what you said to Randall Tier?” Will asks.

“Perhaps you should ask him yourself,” Hannibal says. He looks down, deferentially, but deliberately, adds, almost casually, almost, not quite, an afterthought. “Randall Tier is also an alpha, Will.”

He wonders how Will will respond to the invitation.

Will waits for him to look up. The look Will turns on him when he does is all the answer he could want; knowing, deadly, promising. Will understands what he is suggesting. Will *wants* to. He tries to maintain an external façade of calm but he knows Will can smell what is roiling beneath the façade.

“Christ,” Will says, his voice is warm and suggestive and deadly and *perfect.* “What did I do to deserve you, Dr. Lecter?”

*

He goes to speak to Randall Tier. A final benediction. They stand outside Will’s house.

“You are becoming,” he says.

Randall sniffs the air, curious. “So are you, Dr. Lecter.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says. "Revel in what you are."

*

There is a corpse on his dining-room table. There is a corpse on his dining-room table and Will Graham put it there. Will Graham is standing there with folded arms and there is slick trickling down Hannibal’s leg and he wants to fall to his knees and worship.

“*Will*,” he says. “Is this a courtship?”

“Is it?” Will asks. He can tell Will wants to sound put out, but he smells pleased, magnanimous. “You sent him to kill me.”

“That is not what wound up happening,” Hannibal says.

“Unfortunately for him I’ve been very *aggressive* lately,” Will says. He takes a deep whiff, lets his eyes fall shut. “Christ, Hannibal. You’re drenched. I can smell it from here.”

“What does it smell like?”

“You know what it smells like to me,” Will says.

“Blood,” Hannibal says.

Will nods.

“Not a good smell,” Hannibal says, and he can feel the corners of his lips beginning to curve upwards, just slightly. “To most people.”

“I’m not most people, am I, Dr. Lecter?” Will says. “Blood, the ocean, the ground after rain, the air after lightning, the smell of roasting meat.”

“An acquired taste,” Hannibal says, demurely.

Will shakes his head. “Come here, omega,” he says, and Hannibal goes, half-giddy at the ease of the command. “You’re eager,” Will says. He rubs a hand along the side of Hannibal’s face and Hannibal can’t help leaning into it; he has the idea that the gesture should be humiliating but it feels good. There’s blood on Will’s knuckles. Not all of it his.

“May I?” Hannibal asks. He brings Will’s hand to his lips. He has time to be startled that this is something he wants to do. He thinks, dispassionately, science has demonstrated the healing benefit of omegan saliva. He can feel Will’s eyes on him, dark and hot and a little surprised when he presses his mouth to the first bloodied knuckle, licks. Will hisses out a sharp breath between his teeth. Hannibal halts.

“No,” Will says, his voice is rough but gentle, “don’t stop, Hannibal. It’s good.” He inhales as Hannibal presses his mouth to the next knuckle. “Just— odd.”

“Many natural things,” Hannibal breathes, “are also strange.”

“I’ll say,” Will says; his other hand’s fingers start stroking idly through Hannibal’s hair. It’s an automatic, possessive gesture. It feels strangely tender.

“Did you think of me,” Hannibal asks, “when you were killing him?” He laps inquisitively at a scraped red spot on Will’s index finger.

Will simply looks at him. The look is a wall coming down between them. The look is a *yes* in a language that Hannibal is surprised he can understand.

“You’re *purring*,” Will says. Hannibal blinks. The warm, pleased, enveloping rumble had seemed to be coming from outside him. He can tell that Will clocks his surprise.

“I apologize,” Hannibal says, after a moment. “I will endeavor to control it.”

Will nuzzles along his throat and the sound doesn’t stop. “Don’t stop on my account,” Will says. “It’s — pleasant.”

“Merely pleasant,” Hannibal says.

“It’s like a melody,” Will says, “that I’m going to have stuck in my head the rest of my life.” The livid edge of the bite mark is just visible above Hannibal’s collar. With one hand Will undoes the buttons of Hannibal’s shirt collar, pushes it down until he can see the rest of it. He traces his thumb over it.

“For as long as you like,” Hannibal says.

“I can’t imagine it.”

“I don’t believe that to be true,” Hannibal says. “I believe you are capable of imagining anything you wish.”

“It would be impossible. You’d consume me entirely,” Will says. “I’d be drowning in you all the time. Is that why you—"

“Is that truly what you believe would happen?”

“You already take up so much of a room and we’re not even—" Will starts. Hannibal bends his head to nuzzle at the inside of his wrist. His scent is thick and unbearably sweet, enveloping. It is familiar and unfamiliar, scents of a country he has visited before only in dreams. A home he has never visited but *knows*, intimately. It’s impossible. Drowning is the word exactly.

“Do you have any idea how you smell to me?” Hannibal says.

“Like too many dogs,” Will says. He pauses, thinks. “Like a walled garden.”

Hannibal inhales softly. “Paradise is a walled garden.”

“Don’t you hate it?” Will asks, wonderingly; his fingers dig in behind Hannibal’s ear; Hannibal can’t help making a pleased noise in response; he thinks of Will’s dogs. “If I were you, I’d hate it. Having to — be like this.”

“I can tolerate it,” Hannibal says. “If it’s you.”

“Me?” Will says, half-laughs. Hannibal finishes the first hand’s knuckles, starts on the second. Will’s fingers resume tracing through his hair.

“You are the exception to many rules,” Hannibal says.

“Can I take you to bed?” Will asks.

“If you don’t,” Hannibal says, “I will be extraordinarily disappointed.”

Will half-laughs. “That sounds more like you,” he says. “More than the, please, alpha, routine you’ve been pulling.”

“*Please*, *alpha*,” Hannibal says. It’s deliberate but it feels dangerously close to not being. They catch each other’s eyes.

“It would frighten you,” Will says, “not to be in control of what you wanted.”

“Doesn’t it frighten you?” Hannibal says.

“Yes,” Will says. “I’m terrified.”

“You don’t smell terrified,” Hannibal says.

“Perhaps you don’t know my scent as well as you think,” Will says.

“I still never smell fear on you,” Hannibal says. He watches Will’s throat rise and fall as he swallows. “Many other things but never fear. I smell your desire and your restraint. Frustration.”

“What does frustration smell like?”

“Yours is salty,” Hannibal says.

“I smell fear on you, sometimes,” Will says. “A kind of giddy terror, like the sweat-bar of a roller coaster.”

“An astute comparison,” Hannibal says. “I smell your possessiveness.”

Will wrinkles his nose, bemused. “It already has a smell?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “Green.”

“How does something smell green?”

“It smells alive,” Hannibal says. He laves his tongue carefully over the last knuckle. He feels Will’s eyes on him. He isn’t sure why now he feels like blushing.

Will draws his hand back from Hannibal’s mouth. “There’s blood on your lip.”

Will leans in and licks it off. It becomes a kiss. It becomes a kiss almost by accident; they realize at the same time what it has become, as Will’s bruised hand slides up the back of his neck to pull him in, as he parts his lips to draw in Will’s tongue; as something in Will’s scent sharpens into frustration and exhilaration at the same time. Will is kissing him. For a terrifying moment he doesn’t think *alpha* at all, he just thinks *Will.* It feels infuriatingly right to kiss him, to be kissed by him, but it feels like a discovery, rather than a compulsion; like they have strayed onto a new continent together. It is not like their coupling, frantic like coming up for air; it is something they are doing because they want to do it, because it is good and pleasant. They are simply in it together. He pulls back and looks at Will and catches Will looking at him, and there is an unbearably sweet terror in the look. There is nothing to blame, no compulsion, only desire. It is not a kiss like any other kiss Hannibal remembers; it tastes of Will, of blood; it is impossibly tender; he notices that he is shaking. Hannibal isn’t exactly sure how they get to the bedroom.

Chapter 7

Will doesn't stop kissing him. Hannibal is pressed back against the satin sheets of his own bed, kissing him frantically. The entropy of their system has increased considerably. The majority of their clothes were casualties of the journey to the bedroom. Will's coat is somewhere on the stairs; his pants and belt are in the hallway; Hannibal is tugging determinedly at the final buttons of his shirt. Will has divested him of everything but his undershorts; Will's clever, sore fingers are pulling at the waistband to relieve him of these too. They are drenched; the whole room must smell of his eagerness.

He makes a desperate noise into Will's mouth, half a moan, half a whimper. Will catches it on his tongue. Will pulls back and looks at him. He gets the final button of Will's shirt and Will shrugs it off, carelessly. It is strange having so much of Will's skin under his hands, where he can touch it. Hannibal traces the flushed mouth of a bullet scar on his shoulder with a finger. It should feel more civilized, in a bed like this; it does, and doesn't. Without their clothes, the animal exigencies of their bodies are more readily apparent. Will's thumb trails possessively over the scattering of hair on his chest.

Every touch of Will's fingers on his skin sings through his whole body with *want*. It's so much. So good. He reaches up and tugs impatiently at the elastic of Will's boxers. He manages to pull them partially down over Will's hip; the scent hits him harder with each inch of exposed flesh. God, Will smells *perfect*. It's all desire, nothing warring with it; it smells like a weapon, new-forged and hot and quenched with blood. Hannibal feels consumed by it already. He must gasp, or something.

"I know," Will says, against his lips. Will leans up on his elbows so he can kick his boxers the rest of the way off. "God, Hannibal. You smell--"

The scent of them together is overpowering now. Hannibal has to shut his eyes, just a moment. His legs fall open almost of their own accord; they can both feel the rush of slick when it hits, ruiningly hot. It's odd, feeling Will's eyes on him when this is happening, having proof of Will's eagerness for the sight of him like this. It makes Hannibal bolder. Hannibal lifts his hips so Will can yank his boxers down; his cock springs free; the drenched fabric trails moisture down his calf as it joins the ruck of clothes on the floor. He wonders where the shame went; Will looks at him like he is perfect, like he wants to devour him. When he was sweating his heat out alone in this very bed the vulnerability of having to be so brazen in his desire felt unbearable; but with Will's eyes on him he wants to be *more* brazen. There is an intoxicating, unfamiliar power to it. He wonders if this is how it is for Will when he is fishing, feeling the swift live thing tugging back when he pulls.

Will presses another thirsty kiss to his mouth. His chin tingles from the friction of Will's stubble. He cups his hands around either side of Will's face, to keep him there. Skin to skin, there's almost too much sensation. Will pulls back, looks at him. Will's hair is tousled; his body is faintly glazed with sweat; some lingers enticingly on the sweet curve of his upper lip and Hannibal leans up to taste it, to tangle his fingers in the dark profusion of Will's curls, to kiss him again.

“This is where you had your heat,” Will says, when they separate.

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “Can you smell it?”

Will sniffs questioningly. Swallows. Hannibal watches him swallow, the movement of his throat; it sends a lurch of *want* through him. “Yes,” Will says, it comes out half as a growl, low, dangerous music. “You thought of me *everywhere*, Hannibal.”

Hannibal’s eyes rise to meet his; he is uncertain if it’s instinct or simply that he can’t bear not to be looking at Will. At his *alpha.* “Yes,” he says. “My mind conjured images of you in places you had never been. I feasted on you in imagination and opened my eyes to find the bed empty and myself hungrier than before.”

“It’s not empty now,” Will says, pointedly.

“No,” Hannibal agrees.

“How did you imagine me?” Will asks.

“In quantum physics bodies may be superimposed in multiple positions simultaneously,” Hannibal says, dry. “Thought is similar. However it knows none of the restrictions of physics--” Will’s mouth on his interrupts the observation. He thinks the interruption is deliberate on Will’s part. But the interruption is pleasant. More than pleasant. Will slides his hands down Hannibal’s arms, catches his wrists, pins them behind his head. It is a gesture only; Hannibal could slip easily from the grip. But he permits it. Will leans on his arms as he kicks his own boxers the rest of the way off. He can smell amusement ripening into something else. Will releases them, pulls back to kneel over him, let Hannibal survey the bared terrain of his body. Can they truly never have been naked before? he wonders. It is a shocking oversight; Will is exquisite like this.

“My imaginings fell short of you,” he says.

“Oh?” Will says. He kisses Hannibal again, not exactly on the lips, mouth smearing a path down his throat. He noses over the bite mark, laves it purposefully with his tongue, *suck*s.

“That will be visible.”

“Good,” Will says. He nips it again. Hannibal lets out a choked, desperate whine. Will moves back up to kiss it off his lips. “God,” Will continues, mouth moving over his cheek, to his ear, “when I first heard you make a sound like that it felt like sacrilege. Like finding a dirty limerick in a Gutenberg Bible.”

Hannibal makes an amused noise. It starts amused. He feels too stimulated; Will’s attention is overpowering. To have an alpha who notices these shifts in him, these details he has fought to keep to himself. “And now?”

“I want to make you make another,” Will says. Will reaches down between Hannibal’s legs, trails two fingers through the wash of slick that coats his thighs, slides two fingers into him; Hannibal keens, both deliberate and not deliberate. Will twists, carefully, eyes glued to

Hannibal's face, chasing the signs of his pleasure; when he brushes the right spot Hannibal bites down a second too late around a particularly obscene whine. Will looks pleased.

Hannibal hisses out a long breath through his teeth. "You are determined to take me apart," he says; a small, rueful laugh escapes him.

"Come on," Will says, "let me hear you, omega." His eyes are wide and dark; he looks a little overwhelmed; his fingers don't stop their steady pressure. "Please."

The *please* undoes him. The please, and Will's fingers. His eyes fall shut. His breath is coming in quick gulps; he feels torn open with each wanton noise that escapes his lips. Will adds a third finger. He has found the spot; now he strokes over it every time, sending bolts of ecstasy rippling through Hannibal's whole body. Will's eyes on him are brandingly attentive. The thought that Will's fingers are inside him after what he has done with them, that the hands that killed for him earlier this evening are now determinedly, mercilessly coaxing his pleasure out of him— it is almost too much. Hannibal whines desperately, grunts, bites out a long, despairing moan. And your alpha wants to do this, he thinks, the small corner of his mind that can still think; *he* wants to see you like this. "Will," he breathes.

"Call me alpha?" Will asks; his voice cracks a little over the request; Hannibal can feel Will's hardness sliding against his thigh as his fingers move inside him.

"*Alpha*," Hannibal gasps. It sounds unbearably lewd. His eyes flicker open to catch Will's. They are blown wide; Will smells like he *loves* it, Hannibal knows the sinuous hot scent of his desire; he looks like he is *startled* by how much he loves it.

"God," Will says. He shuts his eyes a moment; his fingers don't stop. "I always thought it was a pornographic cliche, but from you." He shakes his head, looks at Hannibal. "Still pornographic, not a cliche." He cajoles another noise out of Hannibal with a touch that sends pleasure ricocheting through him, twists a cry from his lips.

"Alpha," Hannibal says, tries to be deliberate, but his voice comes out *wrecked*, "please."

"Can you come like this?" Will asks. Hannibal can feel Will's eyes on his face, on his open, gasping mouth, as he asks. He wonders how he looks. Will looks proud and reverent and flushed with his own power.

Hannibal feels bold, then taken aback at his own boldness. "Another," he says. "Please, alpha."

Will exhales sharply. Hannibal can feel his cock twitch against his leg. "Fuck," he says. "Hannibal." But he obeys. He can feel Will's eyes on him, dark with want, pupils devouringly wide. Will's fingers are drenched in slick. They both stare wonderingly at the point where Will's fingers are disappearing into Hannibal's body; they can both feel each time Will coaxes another rush of slick out of him. Some trickles out between Will's fingers, slides down his thumb. "God," Will says. "Look at you. I think you could take my whole hand." He leans down and presses his mouth to the side of Hannibal's neck, almost laughs. "That's a strange thing to say to you and *mean*." Will huffs out a laugh, mesmerized; retracts his fingers an inch and pushes in again. The noise they makes is obscene, wet and intimate; it

is not a noise Hannibal's body has ever made before; it is a sound that both of them are hearing together for the first time, a music they are making together by touching.

"You didn't want anyone to see you like this," Will says, softly, leaning in, "but you're *perfect* like this."

"I have never been like this," Hannibal breathes. Hannibal bridges the rest of the distance and kisses him. Will catches a moan on his lips, then another. He feels Will's fingers slide out of him, then back in, and makes a desperate, primal sound.

He wants to taste Will's arousal. He wants — he is shocked at the things he wants. At how inexhaustibly long the list is. And none of it is vague, a nameless, faceless alpha; all of it is Will. Will's hands. Will's knot. Will's mouth. *This* alpha, in particular. Some of it barely feels like instinct; it just feels like desire. It is terrifying to be uncertain of the difference.

"Are you close?" Will asks. "I'm close just watching you."

Hannibal nods. "I want to come around your knot," he says.

Will pulls back out and Hannibal whimpers with the emptiness. Will's fingers are drenched in slick; Will lifts them to his own lips, steals a taste, then presses them to Hannibal's. Hannibal sucks, curiously. It's messy. He doesn't have a clear sense of his own taste, salty more than anything, but he knows the sight of him like this pleases Will; Will's scent sharpens and intensifies around him until it's almost unbearable. He sucks thirstily with Will's eyes on him; Will withdraws his hand and leans in to kiss him, makes a delighted small whimper against his lips when he tastes him.

"You've never let yourself be an omega before," Will says. "For anyone else."

"No," Hannibal breathes. "Just you."

Hannibal lets his legs fall further open; Will clambers between them, lines himself up. When Will slides into him they both gasp with relief. He's aware that he's making a sound, a purr, a deep low rumble of contentment. He wonders how he looks, how wrecked and desperate. Is there ever going to be enough, he wonders, am I ever going to get enough; what's happening to me? He feels wonderful and strange and perfectly full. The head of Will's cock nudges against the bundle of nerves inside him and he can feel his whole body shake with pleasure, with the extraordinary familiar-unfamiliar fullness of it.

Will kisses him again, rough and claiming; Will's stubble burns against his chin. It's perfect, just what he wants. "I don't think I want you to stop any more," Will breathes, into his neck, like a confession. "I want you like this, Hannibal. Can you stand it?"

"You want me to be your omega," Hannibal says.

"Yes," Will says, "God, yes, Hannibal."

Hannibal makes a barely coherent sound. "*Alpha*," he manages. It is strange being able to see what Will's face does when he says it. Will starts thrusting, carefully, then not carefully.

Hannibal can feel his knot starting already; he's full all over again, it's ecstasy, it's too much; he tries to form words around the feeling. Will stares at him, amazed, bewildered. "That's not English," Will says. Hannibal laughs. He lets his eyes close.

Will thrusts home again; it's too good, too much. He wants it to last forever; it would be unbearable if it lasted a moment longer. Will manages a last series of ragged, desperate thrusts.

Hannibal's chest is heaving like he's run a race. Will leans down and kisses him, thirsty, frantic, and he can feel the pulse of Will's release inside him. He kisses Will again, loose and uncoordinated and sloppy and strangely intimate.

"Please," he gasps against Will's lips.

"Jesus Christ," Will says. "Omega."

Will reaches for his cock with his other hand, wraps his fingers around it — his clever, murderous fingers — and Hannibal is coming, shaking with the ferocity of it, his eyes falling shut. He feels unstuck in time. He blinks up at Will — it is strange to be in this room with him, this familiar room, his own room, his body splayed bonelessly on familiar sheets, Will bent over him, Will's knot settled inside him. His eyes feel wet.

"Alpha," Hannibal gasps. His cock gives a faint, oversensitized twitch; he wants to spend again. They've never been looking at each other, he realizes, when they did this. He wonders how he looks. If Will is any indication he looks ruined and *perfect*. It's too much all over again, in an altogether different way.

Hannibal exhales. Will collapses against his chest; it is an intimate posture to be in while they are linked together. Will fits against him just so; he wishes he could sketch them. This must be his mind returning. He almost regrets it. He tugs Will closer into his arms and Will lets himself be held.

*

He wakes in his own bed, sated on Will's knot, Will's nose buried in his neck, easy and comfortable and strange for being so. There is a new scent he has been noticing on Will at such times, bitter and sweet at the same time, like a new flower that blooms only in moonlight. He is aware of something shifting within himself, too, of the way the persistent hot throb of *want* keeps giving way to the sharper, deeper ache of *need*.

"Hannibal," Will says quietly.

"Will," Hannibal says. He can feel Will's heart rate increase.

"Is this real?"

“How could it not be?” Hannibal asks.

“There are a thousand ways,” Will says, scoffs. He can feel the scoff from the inside.

“Are there?” Hannibal asks.

“You said I could do anything to you,” Will says.

“You don’t believe it.”

“Even if I did, you could stop this at any moment,” Will says. “Take back your control. Take back your composure. You mean it now but you could stop meaning it at any time. Whenever it suited you.”

“Not if you claim me,” Hannibal says.

Will shuts his eyes. “That would be unretractable,” he says.

“I would always be yours,” Hannibal says, “to do with as you wished.”

“You say that so calmly,” Will says. “You say that but I smell the terror.”

“Is terror all you smell?”

“No,” Will says. He shifts against Hannibal. “But you wouldn’t do something so permanent to yourself just because it aroused you.”

“No.”

“So my question remains. What do you want from me, Hannibal? Why are you doing this?”

“My wanting you,” Hannibal replies, quietly, “precedes any *why.* It simply is. Your mere presence enthralled me and to be enthralled humiliated me. A look from you could undo me. A single word. It is a sensation of acute powerlessness. Do you understand why I tried to place you behind bars?”

“I understand why you couldn’t,” Will says.

“To be near you is excruciating,” Hannibal says, dispassionately, as though he is making an observation about the weather. He can smell— he thinks it’s Will’s attention. Will slides deeper into his arms. “Everything in me wants to be possessed by you and everything in me fights against the desire to be possessed. I thought I could be free of you. I believe now that I cannot be free of you except by surrendering to you.”

“Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,” Will quotes, against his neck. Hannibal makes a noise of agreement.

“I can’t think straight around you,” Will says. “What you want has gotten irretrievably mixed up with what I want. I feel… blurred.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

“What used to terrify me was what happened to me every time I scented you,” Will says. “How – unhinged it felt, wanting anything that much.”

“And now?”

“The thought that one day I might see you,” Will says, “and not be able to smell you.” He tugs Hannibal against himself, viciously. “That you could pull out the rug from under me again and take it all away.”

“Then mate with me,” Hannibal says. He turns his face to kiss Will’s throat, as if he is showing on Will where it needs to be done. “Assure yourself of me. Let me assure myself of you.”

Will sniffs him. “It’s soon,” he says. “Isn’t it?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “Will you?”

Chapter 8

Randall Tier is transformed.

Hannibal stands in front of it and can scarcely breathe. It's crude; it's brutal; it's a clever choice of design, something primal where the edges show, where the lack of mastery in construction can contribute to the finish of the piece. It's a sacrifice; it's art; it makes the museum into a cathedral.

Will's scent is enveloping, like a physical touch, nervous and curious. *He wants me to see*, he thinks; *he cares if I like it*. The thought is almost unbearable. *Will Graham made this, because he wants to be my alpha*. He is afraid of what Will must be able to scent on him. He suspects it is not only want, not only the variety of lewd possibilities that occur to him to demonstrate to Will exactly how much he likes it. Not only want but something deeper, more terrifyingly revealing, his joy that Will sees the beauty in this, that he understands. It feels familiar and foreign at once, the burst of delight at feeling Will's tug at the end of the string connecting them, the tiny bright spark of *recognition* before it ignites the gasoline fire of want. It is becoming a familiar sensation. He thinks, terrified, you are starting to need it. You are starting to wait for him to tug back.

Jack stands between them. It is well to remember that Jack is there. If Jack were not there he could get on his knees; he could tear Will's pants open and fill his nostrils with the scent of him, could taste him. Is it possible he has not yet taken Will in his mouth, has not caught his most intimate flavors on his tongue? Beside him, Will shifts, almost imperceptibly. So Will can smell the desire, at any rate.

He tries to think what he would have said about this before it meant too much. If he had simply seen this and been called on to interpret it, without the heady press of instinct.

"He's mocking him," Hannibal says.

Jack nods. "He denied Randall Tier the respectful end he denied others."

"No," Will says, suddenly, "this isn't mockery. It's honor." Will doesn't look at him, but Hannibal can scent the rush of adrenaline, the giddy recklessness of what he's about to say; he holds himself entirely still and waits. "This is a *courtship gift*." It feels impossibly brazen. It takes every ounce of his restraint not to lift his eyes to Will's. Not to bare his throat.

Jack stiffens. He gives Will a hard look that Hannibal can't entirely interpret. There is no reason for Jack to be so personally appalled, Hannibal thinks. Perhaps it is only general dismay, at such a savage display in this day and age. "A courtship gift? Does he know what century it is?"

"He doesn't care," Will says. "The omega he's courting doesn't care either." The casualness with which Will says it; Hannibal feels like his own scent must do something. Will's does, in response to it.

“Why here?” Jack asks. “Why so public? Wouldn’t he simply deposit it at the door of whomever he’s trying to court?”

Will’s scent takes a peculiar turn, becomes loud and chaotic, trying to drown out particular notes in a chaos of instruments. So this is how Will smells when he is hiding something, Hannibal thinks. There’s a *warning* in Will’s scent now that he wasn’t expecting. It feels like a physical touch, like a hand tugging up his scarf, straightening his collar to hide the bite mark.

“Perhaps his omega likes an ostentatious display,” Hannibal says, mildly; he can feel Will’s eyes burning towards him. If Will is going to be brazen, he can be brazen too. It feels extraordinarily bold, to speak of it like this, in front of Jack. To call himself *his omega*. Will can’t resist looking at him; the glance is quick but molten, intimate and possessive; he feels branded by the look. Hannibal feels a giddy, helpless thrill at the danger of it. He can almost smell Jack's discomfort. And the way Will looks at him. Like he knows how dangerous it is but wants it.

“He would have to be a pretty sick son of a bitch,” Jack says, “to find anything appealing in a display like this.”

“It’s not appealing,” Hannibal says. “It's primal. Savage. It’s a breathtaking display of power.”

“Not only of power,” Will says. “Of willingness.” Oh, Hannibal thinks. We're going for it, then.

“This killer is capable of extraordinary brutality,” Hannibal says. “He has grown intimate with his instincts.”

“Uncomfortably intimate,” Will says. “And he wants his omega to see.”

Hannibal hears the words, his omega, nestled in the sentence like a gift; he has to look at Will. Fighting the urge is like swimming against a current. He tries to make the look seem casual; there's nothing casual about it, it's too quick, too reflexive. Will's eyes are wide and startled when they catch his, like Will wasn't expecting him to look. "He knows what he wants now," Hannibal says. He tries to make it sound calm. *Stop looking at him*, he thinks. Stop looking at him like he's your *alpha*. For a moment they just stare at each other; it feels like pulling at a finger trap; the struggle just tugs them tighter.

"He wants to claim what's his," Will says. "He's not afraid of what he wants any longer."

He can feel Jack’s hard look.

“He’s never killed before,” Hannibal says. “Not like this.” Will breaks the look first; Hannibal turns to the body. It *is* appealing, he thinks; raw but beautiful. For all Will’s talk of honoring Randall there is a humiliation in it; he has been plated, not commemorated. It’s an exercise in dominance. Will killed him with his hands and then he took him apart, reconstituted him into this exquisite mockery of a beast. *Took him apart with the same hands that took you apart*, he thinks. *Your alpha finished satisfying you and then he climbed out of*

your bed and did this. He can feel Will's scent sharpening in response. He lingers on the recollection of it; of his composure unraveling on Will's fingers, on his knot; of Will's devouring gaze as he thrust home inside him. Will exhales sharply, like the air's being sucked out of him. Will smells obscene, *want you, want to wreck you all over again.*

Alpha, he thinks. *Please.*

Will takes a long, shaky breath. “It’s his first time doing anything like this,” Will says. “He’s never had anyone to do something like this *for*, before.”

“Is it going to stop here?” Jack asks. Hannibal thinks, there’s another question in this question. And suddenly there’s something strange in Will’s scent. Something Hannibal can’t quite place; a diffusion, an evasiveness. Like he’s reached for Will’s fingers and they’ve turned to smoke in his hand. For a moment he thinks, can Jack *know?* He sets the thought aside.

“He has no regret for what he’s done,” Hannibal says.

“No,” Will says. Will’s eyes find his again. They feel like a physical weight on him, heat and reassurance. It feels like landing safely on the ground. *God*, Hannibal thinks, *I want you. Am I ever going to stop wanting you?* “He doesn’t regret it.”

*

“Will,” Jack says.

“Jack,” Will says.

“I’m not an idiot,” Jack says. "I have eyes."

“I know that,” Will says.

“Do you?” Jack says. “Then what the hell was that?”

Will shrugs. “It’s working."

“*Is* this a courtship gift?” Jack asks. “That’s not the same as self-defense, Will.”

“It was self-defense,” Will says. “Repurposed.”

“You told me it was self-defense,” Jack says. “You told him it was a courtship gift.”

“Do you think I’m lying to you?”

“I’m not sure you’re lying to *him*,” Jack says.

“That’s the point,” Will says. “It’s so much easier for him to tell I’m lying than it is for you. I can’t reel him in by lying.”

“So you’re courting him?” Jack says. “I never asked you to do that."

“It’s no truer than it needs to be,” Will says.

"Let me rephrase that, Will. I don't want you to do that."

"But he asked me to," Will says.

"Oh," Jack says. "So now you just do whatever Hannibal Lecter wants?"

“You have to trust me,” Will says. “I’m doing the only thing I can.”

“I trust you,” Jack says. “I’m just not sure I trust you with him.”

Will looks at him. “What are you trying to say, Jack?”

“You tell me you aren’t letting things go too far,” Jack says, “and I accept that. But."

“But,” Will says.

Jack swallows, uncomfortably. “Believe me, Will, I don’t want to be having this conversation any more than you do,” he says, “but we’re having it. I want to believe you, but-- I’ve seen him *deferring* to you. I've seen you scenting him. All right? You say, my omega, he goes glassy-eyed. So I’m surprised to find you looking me in the eye and telling me you’re not—“

“What would it matter if I was?” Will says, sharp. “I’m the alpha, Jack. Wouldn’t I be in control even then?”

“Are you in control?” Jack asks.

“Do you even have to ask?” Will asks.

“The one outcome here I cannot accept,” Jack says, “is he tricks you into -- god forbid -- bonding with him."

“A consummation devoutly to be wished,” Will says, mouth twisting.

“It’s not funny,” Jack says. “You bonding with him is not a joke, Will. He’d be in your head for the rest of your life. There’d be pieces of you that didn’t belong to you anymore. They’d belong to him. He gets put behind bars where you can’t touch him it would *break* you. I’ve seen it happen. People think they’re doing the noble thing, turn their mates in, and — that’s it for them. Nobody on earth could stand it.”

“That’s what they say,” Will says.

“You'd know everything he’d ever done," Jack says. "You don't want that in your head, Will."

Will laughs, hugs himself with his arms. "No," he says. "You're right. I don't."

"Then stop giving him *exactly what he wants*," Jack says.

*

“Did you like it?” Will asks.

“You scarcely need to ask,” Hannibal says. He looks up from the harpsichord. “It was reckless of you. Telling Jack what it was.”

Will’s scent does something strange; flattens, becomes diffuse, sickly sweet, perfume commingled with the scents of living plants. “Jack will hardly accuse either of us,” he says. “Chilton’s conviction ensured that.”

Hannibal tries to keep the question from showing on his face. He feels something dropping out from beneath him; it is not only his face he has to keep from showing the question. If he doubts, Will is going to smell it. The thought is discomfiting. He hits a concluding trill, followed by a chord.

“Tell me what you’re playing at,” Will says. He sits down on the bench. “Besides the harpsichord.”

“Must I be playing at something?” Hannibal says. He looks over.

“Always,” Will says. He sniffs the air. “I miss when I couldn’t smell you at all,” he says. “Now all I can do is smell you everywhere.”

“Do you regret tampering with my suppressants?”

Will makes a face. “Should have just sent him to kill you.”

“That is what I thought, too,” Hannibal says. He watches Will take a long inhale.

“Christ,” Will says, “you smell good tonight.”

“What in particular?”

“I can smell you and… myself on you,” Will says. “It smells right.”

“Doesn’t it?”

“You don’t have to be so—much,“ Will says. “This has never happened for me before. You could get away with a lot less.”

“Tell me,” Hannibal says.

“It’s — excessive. Lavish. Detailed. Not just water tonight but river water, the Mississippi after the first new spring shoots show along the banks. Not just a stream but a stream in the fall clogged with leaves.” Will lowers his voice. “Not just blood but. Fresh. Hot. Leaving the body at a gallop.” Will grimaces. “You don’t just smell good, you smell *perfect*.”

Hannibal turns slowly toward him. Will is looking at him. The look is heavy and – inescapably *fond*. It feels like a physical caress. “My omega,” Will says, whisper-soft. Hannibal shivers; he doesn’t know why.

“Do you feel any regret?” Hannibal asks. Will presses two keys idly. Hannibal’s fingers slide over his, complete the chord.

“I don’t regret anything I’ve done for you,” Will says.

“Was it only for me?” Hannibal asks. “Did you take no delight in it?”

“No,” Will says. “I – liked it.” He flexes his fingers, makes another chord. Hannibal complicates it, completes it. “You know I liked it. I felt – alive.”

“Your actions are changing your physiology,” Hannibal says. “You are evolving. Becoming.”

“Becoming a better mate for you,” Will says; Will’s mouth brushes intimately against his ear; the words feel like a secret whispered into his skin.

“We are both being changed,” he says.

He can smell something sharp and reckless and sweet in Will’s scent, a heady rush of adrenaline. “I want to be,” Will says. Hannibal inhales deeply; it just smells warm and right. There’s no strange note in it, no cacophony. It smells trustworthy. He aches to believe it. He thinks Will can smell the ache. Will kisses him on the neck. It’s sweet and gentle, a kiss, not a bite; but it’s in the most suggestive possible position, and it lingers.

“But if you always did what you wanted,” Hannibal says, “you would be other than you are.”

He can feel Will’s swallow. Will walks his fingers up the keyboard to find his; it makes a melody. He can feel the shape of Will’s mouth on his neck change; it becomes a smile; his scent takes on a note of suggestion. “Have you ever done it on a harpsichord?”

*

Curled in his bed with Will wrapped around his back, nosing along the juncture of his shoulder and throat, their bodies still knotted together, Hannibal sighs.

“Alana thinks you smell like a slaughterhouse,” Will says. “She thinks I’m taking advantage.”

“You are,” Hannibal says, “but that is not why.”

“What advantage am I taking?” Will asks.

“Every advantage I have to offer,” Hannibal says. “You have stolen into all the rooms of my memory palace. I can smell you there, where I ought to be safe.”

“If you want to be safe,” Will says, “we have to stop before your heat.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “But we are not going to.”

“No,” Will says, biting the edge of Hannibal’s chin. “We’re not, are we?”

*

“You smell different,” Abigail says.

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

She sniffs. “Omega?” Abigail says.

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

“Bold choice,” Abigail says. Hannibal watches her face for the flicker of revulsion.

“What do I smell like to you?”

“Wet morning in the woods,” Abigail says, immediately. “Fresh deer carcass. Is that why you were gone last month? Was it your heat?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

“You’d never had one before.”

Hannibal shakes his head. “It was a novel experience.”

“Lot to take at your age,” Abigail says.

“How is the Mozart coming along?” Hannibal asks.

“Why now all of a sudden?” Abigail asks. “Did you imprint on somebody?”

“It will get easier but only if you practice,” Hannibal says.

“Did you imprint on Will? Is he your alpha?”

“Abigail,” Hannibal says.

“I think you imprinted on him,” Abigail says.

“What makes you think that?” Hannibal says.

“You’d be back on your suppressants if you didn’t think you could get him to bond with you.” Abigail turns around on the piano bench. “Are you going to make him hunt for you? Does he know you didn’t kill me?”

She starts playing before he can answer. She has been practicing, Hannibal notices.

*

Will scents him and his face does something unfamiliar.

“What is it?” Hannibal asks.

“Nothing,” Will says. “A memory. I thought, for a second.” His face hardens. His scent freezes over, cold and crackling and unwelcoming. Ice on a river, halting the thaw.

Hannibal is terrified he will ask further. He is not sure what he will do. It is strange to have the impulse to tell everything, to let all his secrets come rushing out of him in a great cataract of words, admissions. But he thinks of the strange too-sweet flatness in Will's scent. He thinks of Jack's eyes on them. He seals the words back behind his tongue.

*

“Mr. Graham,” a familiar, unpleasant voice says.

“Ms. Lounds,” Will says. He stands in the doorway of his house, doesn't move to open the door.

“Do you really believe Dr. Chilton is the Chesapeake Ripper?”

Will shrugs. “Miriam Lass identified him.”

“Did it surprise you to learn that Hannibal Lecter was an omega?” Freddie asks.

“Did it surprise you?” Will says.

“My response seems less *germane* than yours,” Freddie says.

“Are you trying to ask if I’m fucking Hannibal Lecter?”

“I wasn’t,” Freddie says, “but— are you?”

“I don’t think that’s any of your business.”

“You are,” Freddie says. “God have mercy on us all.”

“We’re done talking,” Will says.

“You know better than anyone else what he’s capable of,” Freddie says.

“That’s even truer than you think,” Will says.

“Yet you’re fucking him. What’s that like?”

Will bares his teeth in a miserable grin. “It’s spectacular.”

“Does Jack know?” Freddie asks.

“I think he guesses,” Will says. He’s avoiding eye contact again.

“But you haven’t told him.”

“How do you picture that conversation going, Freddie?” Will asks.

“I don’t imagine he’d be entirely surprised,” Freddie says. “Unless, of course, you’ve been lying to him about it. Do you still think Hannibal Lecter is the Chesapeake Ripper?”

“Isn’t that question answered by the answer to your previous question?”

“In your case,” Freddie says, “no.”

“Thanks,” Will says.

“You’re welcome,” Freddie says, chipper. “So all this — you getting put behind bars, you holding a gun on him, threats and testimony and murders of varying degrees — this was foreplay?”

“What’s the angle here, Freddie?”

“The murder of Randall Tier,” Freddie asks, pointed. “Was that also foreplay?”

“This interview is over,” Will says.

Freddie observes him, silently. “I don't think you were surprised to learn that Dr. Lecter was an omega.”

“Nothing about Dr. Lecter surprises me,” Will says, smoothly.

“Would it surprise you if he had imprinted on you?”

Will laughs, narrowly, between his teeth. “That is the opposite of what has happened, I assure you.”

“Is it?” Freddie asks. “When was the last time Dr. Lecter refused you, Mr. Graham?”

“I think that’s enough, Ms. Lounds.” Will tries to get the door closed.

Freddie sticks a gloved hand in it. “It hadn’t occurred to you,” Freddie says. “Because you wouldn’t let it?”

“You know what Hannibal is capable of,” Will says. "He's always in control."

“You could find out very easily,” Freddie says. “If he wasn’t. Just tell him to confess. Tell him to stop. Turn him in. No one would fault it, after everything he’s done. But you haven't. Why not?”

"Why do you think?” Will says.

Freddie looks at him. “I never took you for a romantic, Will Graham.”

Will snorts. “You know me so well.”

“One last question," Freddie says. "Why is Randall Tier’s body in your shed?”

*

Jack plays the call in his office. It's from Freddie. It ends in a scream.

Hannibal looks to Will. Will only superficially looks calm; there's tension humming under his skin. His scent smells slippery.

"That's the last call from Freddie Lounds. It pinged a phone tower in Wolf Trap, Virginia."

"She was supposed to interview me," Will says. "She never showed." Hannibal watches him swallow. "I live in the middle of nowhere," Will says. "If someone wanted to take her, it wouldn't be a bad place to do it."

Will is lying. Hannibal smells something nervous and cloying, too sweet, perfume mixed among the live scents. He wonders if Jack can smell it. But he can also smell Will's curiosity, can tell Will is curious about something, about how he's coming across, and that makes Hannibal curious. He wouldn't wonder about Jack.

He starts to think about it, about Jack's strange complacency, his too-strong disappointment. The strange mixture of nerves and bravado that has characterized all their interactions. He tugs at the thought.

He knows Will can smell him thinking.

He and Will look at each other, curious; the look lands like a hand crashing down on piano keys, all the notes striking at once. He sees Will seeing him and Will sees him seeing. Will's thoughts feel so loud he's amazed Jack can't hear them; there's a surge of possessiveness, almost panic in Will's scent, like he's checking his pockets for a key. The connection between them crackles like a string of firecrackers held in singed fingers. He expects to smell frustration, anger, confusion, dismay at being suspected. Instead he smells, *Don't let go*. *Don't let go yet.* There's something small and desperate about it; he doesn't know if Will knows he's doing it. He keeps hold of the thread even while his fingers burn.

Chapter 9

Will sets down a brown-paper-wrapped parcel on the kitchen counter.

Hannibal feels disgustingly *provided for*. It is the same unfamiliar feeling of rightness as before with the fish but miles worse, more intense, because it is deliberate, because they are both allowing it to happen. He can feel Will looking at him; his eyes snap up instinctively to Will's and Will doesn't look away, holds the look. *This is how it would feel if I let myself be yours*, the look says. *Do you like it as much as I do?* Will smells rich, indulgent, the tropical enveloping scent of his possessiveness is like stepping out into a summer night, warm enough to go naked in.

Hannibal unwraps the parcel. The flesh inside it is plump and firm and the provenance exhilaratingly dubious. *Is this--?* he thinks. Will looks at him, knowingly. This *willingness* in Will to please is new.

Oh, Hannibal thinks, *perfect*. The thought emerges as a purr.

Will smiles. "I like making you do that," he says. "Strange how much."

"Not strange," Hannibal says. "Natural. We are all creatures of biology."

"Natural for me to wish to provide the meat," Will says, a little ruefully, "and natural for you to be pleased that I provided it." Will smells almost amused. "Look at us, doing what's natural. We tell ourselves that we're doing things for complicated, elevated reasons, and all the time we're conspiracies of cells, conspiring to produce more conspiracies of cells."

"Biology may have composed the music," Hannibal says. "But the performance is our own. What have you brought me?"

Will's scent surges hot and cold for a second, like opening a furnace door in a blizzard, and he says, "She was a slim and delicate pig."

Hannibal allows himself a moment of terrifying indulgence: after he is mine, after he knows everything, this will happen all the time. My alpha will provide for the three of us. It sends an alarming surge of want through him. What an ordinary thing to want. How dull, how small, how miraculous.

Something about it makes Will's eyes lift curiously to him and he freezes. Then he notices: Will's scent is — a cacophony. Pride in his transgression and desire, omnipresent and thick, and, --*oh*--affection, but also a slipperiness, something that twists out of his nostrils before he can lay hands on it. And it is coupled with a cold clammy scent that Hannibal has never smelled before. Fear, perhaps. Will looks at him, almost apologetically.

"Will you sous-chef?" Hannibal asks. His voice is calm, at least. "I will make lomo saltado."

Will nods. Hannibal hands him a knife.

*

There's something murky and wrong about Will's scent all through the meal, a sweet unpleasant flatness to it, like it's a picture posing as a living face. It clogs Hannibal's nostrils and gets in the way of the flavor of the meat. He wonders what his own scent is doing.

The meat tastes acidic. "This animal tastes frightened," Hannibal says.

"Freddie said you imprinted on me," Will says.

Hannibal looks levelly at him. "And if I had?"

"Then I'd really be taking advantage," Will says.

"Would you?" Hannibal asks. He watches Will eat another bite of the meat. "There is much you could have done to me that you have refrained from doing. You could easily determine the truth of the matter. Compel me to do any number of things. Yet you have not. Is it because you fear to be in control, or because you are optimistic?"

"Optimistic?" Will says.

"That I would choose you deliberately," Hannibal says. "That I would choose this."

"There is so little now between us that can be solely excused by biology," Will says. "Yours or mine."

"Does that make things better or worse?"

"Yes, I think, is the answer to that," Will says.

Hannibal nods grimly. "It makes deception all the more painful."

"It feels like it shouldn't be possible to lie to you," Will says.

"You are hoping to learn something from my answer," Hannibal says.

Will looks at him, like he's looking at him over the wall of the conversation. Hannibal looks back. "Yes," he says.

"Then I must choose my answer carefully," Hannibal says.

Will looks at him again; his scent twitches towards the sun-warmed grassy smell that Hannibal has started calling fondness. "Yes."

"Is it because you wish to deceive me that you pose the question," Hannibal says, "or from some other motive?"

"It's true," Will says, "that it doesn't feel like something I should be capable of doing. You feel — lodged beneath my skin, below words, where you should be able to know all my

motives and intentions."

"Yet it is possible," Hannibal says. "It is possible for you to do but I do not believe it is possible for me to be unaware that you are doing it."

"That is what I thought too," Will says. "We know each other too well now for anything to be that simple." He looks over at Hannibal, reaches over, brushes some hair out of his face. Hannibal is always amazed at how willing Will has become to touch him. To initiate the touch. It feels proprietary. The touch lingers.

"I wonder what became of Ms. Lounds," Hannibal says, "after she made that insinuation." Will's scent flashes hot and cold again.

Will looks at him. It is another look over the wall. *I can smell doubt all over you*, the look says. *What do you want me to say?* "Freddie suspected you were the Chesapeake Ripper," he says. "As your alpha I felt obligated to protect you."

Hannibal looks at him. The words all feel true. There is a silvery triumphant note of honesty ringing through Will's scent. But there is also that swift curl of fear, that slipperiness. Will watches him noticing it. "Freddie's imagination rivals even your own," he says. He smells frustration, salty, *why do we bother lying*, Will's scent says. *I'll stop when you do,* he thinks. *But you haven't.*

Will's fingers idly trace his neck, the perimeter of the bruise. *Your mouth left that*, Hannibal thinks; *that shape is you on me.* He can see Will catching something of the thought; his scent curves possessive and warm and – shot through for a blinding second with clammy terror, like a drowning man's hand clutching for a spar. It rattles him; he tries not to look rattled; they both catch the slip. Will smiles almost sheepishly.

"This meat is not pork," Hannibal says.

"No," Will says, looks level at him, and that smells true. "It's long pig." Will is beautiful like this. Dangerous, willing, eager. He thinks with a horrible jolt: he will even be beautiful when he is lying. He wants to kiss him.

"It's so much more specific now," Will says. "Your scent."

"What do you detect now?" Hannibal asks.

Will's face softens. "You want to kiss me," he says.

Hannibal pushes his chair back, moves around the table, just as Will does. He catches Will in his arms, kisses him. Will clutches at him. There's a strange desperation to it. It is strange to know him, want him, yearn for him, and be uncertain of him. It is frightening to be familiar enough to know the difference. This is what you were afraid of, he thinks. This is what you should have been afraid of. He should smell deceit on him and not want to kiss him. He should smell this evasiveness, this treacherous slipperiness, and want to expel Will from the halls of his mind, but he can still smell the vine-like curl of his possessiveness, the hot verdant thing that cries out *mine*. Will still smells terribly like home.

"*Hannibal*," Will says. He sounds wrecked. He lets Hannibal push him up against the wall of the dining room; the kisses become fiercer; Hannibal starts to tug at the fastenings of his pants, gets the button free, shoves down the zipper. Will steps out of them. Hannibal reaches into his boxers, wraps his hand around him; Will grunts into his mouth.

He is still almost entirely clothed when they get to the bedroom; Will is naked, sprawled under him, rubbing up against him. It feels primal. Will wants to mark him; he wants to be marked. This suit will smell entirely of Will. Everything will smell oppressively of Will. He can smell how much Will wants it to.

"Christ," Will says, "look at me, practically humping your leg, and I don't even have the decency to be ashamed about it."

"No," Hannibal says, dry amusement; despite himself it still sounds breathy and suggestive, "you don't."

"Just marking my territory," Will says; their eyes catch; here we are again, the look says, hello. It is strange to still be looking at one another through the bars of their mutual desire; not only the deception but the delight, too. Hello, his eyes say, what a surprise finding you here, under me. You shouldn't be surprised, Will's look says. This is what we are now, together; do you deny it?

"A strong, primal instinct," Hannibal says; his voice is breathless. "Difficult to resist the impulse to protect what is yours."

"Difficult to resist any impulse when it comes to you," Will says, "and you know it."

"You have resisted some of them," Hannibal says.

"Barely any." Will inhales greedily; his mouth twists up knowingly. "God," he says, "you smell so willing."

"You have not sounded the depths of my willingness," Hannibal says. He looks down at Will, bends his head to kiss him on the neck. Will's scent is strong there. He begins kissing his way down Will's chest, over his stomach, down to the juncture of his legs where the scent of his desire is strongest. He can feel Will looking at him; when he glances up and their eyes catch, Will lets out a shaky, desperate exhale, like he's been holding his breath.

Hannibal leans to lower the flat of his tongue to the pale skin below Will's navel, above the nest of dark hair where his cock stirs, already hard and leaking. The scent of Will's desire is unbearably strong; Hannibal makes an involuntary noise when he catches the first taste of his skin.

"*Fuck*," Will says.

Hannibal licks the crease of Will's hip where the sweat has gathered; it's filthy and ambrosial at once. Will makes a low, feral, gutted noise. He pulls up, noses along Will's length, takes

him in his mouth. It's ecstasy. He tastes perfect. Hannibal feels starving and sated at once. It is impossible to articulate this hunger. He begins to suck, thirstily, wantonly. It was never like this before. Nothing was like this. He shuts his eyes. It's – delicious is too weak a word. It feels like a maenadic ritual, sacred, like accepting the body of a god on his tongue.

He looks up; Will's head is thrown back; his mouth is open; he looks like a saint in the throes of martyrdom. Will smells *right*; heat and desire and an open gate, a garden beyond it, where he can lie on his back in the grass and look up at the stars and give them new names. Will's fingers slide into his hair. There is no doubt between them here. *Mine*, Will's scent says; *mine. Yours*, he thinks.

"*Hannibal*," Will groans. He blinks, dazed. "Fuck, I'm— I'm going to knot your mouth, if you don't—"

Hannibal simply swallows around him. He knows how he must smell; his willingness must be painfully obvious; Will makes an almost pained noise of pleasure and he can feel the rippling beginning of his knot, swelling obscenely past his lips, into his mouth, forcing it to take its shape. It's too much. It's impossible. And then it's even bigger. Will emits a helpless, wanton, desperate sound. Hannibal closes his eyes. He has to breathe through his nose. It's *good*. He *likes it.* Someone gasps, brokenly; it must be Will.

"How did you become every filthy thing I've ever wanted?" Will says.

Hannibal's face feels wet. His jaw is burning. He wants *more.* He makes a desperate whine in the back of his throat and Will exhales suddenly, a soft, sharp *Ah,* and then his mouth is fuller than it's ever been, and it tastes *perfect*. It's like being able to taste Will's scent; and the scent is all want, *need*, hot and salt-sweet and sharp. *You are the salt of the earth*, he thinks. *When the salt has lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?* He can hear himself starting to purr again. It feels obscenely revealing; that his body is determined to let Will know exactly how much he likes being used like this. He can feel Will's knot twitch against his exhausted jaw and there's simply too much, some leaks past the seal of his lips; Will groans, abjectly.

Hannibal's eyes open to look at him. Will's eyes on him are devouring, hot, like Will wants to carve the image of him like this on his memory. Hannibal feels a horrible, terrifying lurch of *need*, amazement at the need. He does not know what is more strange: being like this, or wanting to be like this. Will keeps his fingers reassuringly in Hannibal's hair but traces his thumb over his mouth, the point where they're joined, out of which his own seed is leaking.

"So good," Will says. "So fucking good for me."

He can tell how filthy he must look from the way Will's gaze drags searingly over every millimeter of his face. He swallows; his jaw aches; his throat aches. Hannibal takes a deep shaky breath through his nose. "Ah, fuck," Will gasps. Another spasm fills his mouth. Overflows it. Hannibal's eyes fall shut again. He feels ruined everywhere; his trousers are drenched with slick at this; his mouth is being mercilessly used and filled. Will's fingers feel warm and reassuring in his hair. The tenderness is even more ruinous, somehow. He holds still, breathes through his nose; every sense feels brimming full of *alpha*. "I can't believe you're *letting* me," Will says. He can feel Will's muscles shifting beneath him as Will moves; Will's other thumb traces around the well-used oval of his lips, smears his chin with it. He

feels intoxicated, drunk on the thick scent of Will's pleasure, his possessiveness, the sharpness of his desire. There's something green and dewy and lush, entwining around him, pouring into his nostrils, like another form of penetration. Like Will wants to be inside him everywhere. It's an unfamiliar sort of comfort; he inhales it thickly, greedily; his tongue catches it loosely in his mouth. His cheeks are damp, his mouth is leaking saliva and come, he feels *marked*. He feels spoiled. Degraded, and like he's been given too much of everything he wants. "Hannibal," Will breathes; his name sounds *filthy.* His voice sounds wrecked. He can feel the slow beginning of the knot subsiding; the stretch becomes gradually less; his cheeks lose their distortion and Will's cock slides back through his swollen lips with an obscene pop. He knows the sensation will pass, but he feels irreversibly stretched; thinks, *I'm the wrong shape for anything else now.*

Will tugs him up, kisses him; he's too well-used and sore to respond more than a little; Will's tongue plunders his weary mouth, tasting himself, memorizing the shape that his knot has left. It's a filthy, possessive gesture; Hannibal loves it. Will pulls back. "You shouldn't be beautiful like this," he says.

"No?" Hannibal asks, and — oh, his voice is wrecked. His voice has never sounded like this. Will kisses his cheek, strangely reverent. Hannibal swallows thinly; his jaw is sore; his lips feel impossibly loose, strangely empty.

"Do you hate it?" Will says, pausing to lick some of the mess off his chin, then kiss it back into his mouth; the kiss grows distracting. "How right it feels?"

Hannibal tries to smile; he's not sure his mouth quite obeys. It feels impossibly obscene. "I should," Hannibal says. He rubs his jaw. Will takes over, solicitously, rubs soothingly at it with his fingers; it's a strangely *alpha* gesture that sends a hot pang of want through him. His alpha, taking care of him. It does feel better when Will touches it. It sends a chill of vulnerability through him.

"It would be so easy," Will says, "if we stopped fighting it."

"Are we fighting it?" Hannibal asks. He shuts his eyes again. He thinks Will can scent his amusement. "What would surrender look like, then?"

Will grimaces. "Like this," he says. "But fewer forts. Is that better?"

Hannibal hums in agreement. Hannibal swallows. Will keeps solicitously rubbing his jaw; it feels horribly intimate. *Please*, he thinks, *spend the rest of your life breaking me as long as you put me back together*.

"I can't imagine you wanting me in your head your whole life," Will says. Hannibal fixes him with a look. "I can imagine you *wanting* it," Will amends. "Not allowing it."

"An appalling failure of imagination," Hannibal says. The words blur a little. It's unspeakably lewd. You sound like someone's omega, he thinks; *his*, he thinks.

Will keeps tracing soothing circles on his jaw, it relaxes somewhat; the ache lessens. "Let me take care of you," Will says. "Tell me what you want."

Hannibal thinks, I want the truth, and then he thinks, no, I want *him.* He thinks Will can smell the thoughts, the surprise. Will kisses along his jaw; he feels a sudden terrifying spike of, how many times am I going to feel the sweet friction of his stubble there, what if this stops, what am I going to do. “Stay,” he says.

Will looks at him. “You could ask something much harder than that,” he says. “You know I’d kill for you.”

Hannibal swallows. He rubs his jaw. Will takes over again. “I think you want me to ask you to,” he says; his voice still sounds filthy.

“I haven’t satisfied you yet,” Will says. “I feel it like an itch. Can I touch you?”

“You know you can do anything to me,” Hannibal says, “alpha.”

“Do you want me to touch you?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “Please.”

Will keeps kissing his well-used mouth; Will’s hands slide down his body. “It’s surprisingly gratifying,” he says. “You, having to admit what you want.”

“Surprisingly?”

“Like everything I thought would humiliate you,” Will says, “it just — reveals you and humiliates me.”

“Does it humiliate you?” Hannibal asks. “To want?”

“To be seen wanting,” Will says. “By you. Yes.”

“Why?” Hannibal asks.

“I feel like Wile E. Coyote,” Will says. “Utterly exposed by my own desire. In the moments before I remember to doubt everything feels possible. Gravity itself is suspended.” Will ducks his head to press a kiss to his neck. “Then comes the inevitable long plunge.”

“If you ceased to doubt you could remain airborne forever,” Hannibal says.

“That’s the trick, isn't it?” Will grins ruefully at him. “I’ll stop if you will.”

Will unbuttons Hannibal’s vest, slides it down his shoulders, starts on his shirt. The suit smells intoxicatingly of Will, of alpha; even the pants that are dripping with his own slick smell of *alpha*. His pants hit the floor; he toes off his socks. Finally he is kneeling over Will, naked and aroused and tousled; he feels thoroughly owned. Will’s eyes drink him in, an overt intimate once-over, like Will’s surveying his belongings and pleased to find them all still in place. Then his scent curls in on itself, there’s a quick jab of something like panic; it’s oddly familiar; Hannibal recognizes it from himself.

“Do you know the story of King Phineus?” Hannibal asks.

“He and Wile E. should have talked.” Will looks knowingly up at him; his eyes keep soaking up the sight of Hannibal like this; it’s flattering and flaying at once. “He was punished for his crimes with blindness. Punished again by the sun god for having chosen blindness.”

“Punished with hunger,” Hannibal says. “Doomed to have all his feasts befouled and snatched from him by harpies. A terrible punishment, to have your food always dashed from your lips.”

“Yes,” Will says. Will’s tongue slides out to wet his lips; Hannibal feels a throb of *want*. Will looks at him like he knows exactly. Will leans in for the kiss, takes his time about it. It feels a little obscene. Will tips him onto his side, pulls back. “Spread for me,” he says. “Let me taste you.”

Hannibal does. He lies back against the sheets and lets his legs fall open; it’s a *presentation*. Will growls and looks taken aback at the sound; it prompts a rush of slick, and then Will looks less taken aback. The look that passes between them is knowing, almost amused again. “I’m not sure I’ll ever get used to seeing you like this,” Will says.

“No,” Hannibal says.

The position is going to be too much; he is not sure he will last long watching as Will does this to him. Will kneels between his legs, gets his legs over his shoulders. Will’s hair is tousled, damp with sweat; he looks debauched already. Their eyes catch; Will’s are dark with desire, pupils like inkblots blotting up the blue; more slick leaks from him at the look and Will tilts his head to lap it up without breaking eye contact. Hannibal makes a noise of startled pleasure that’s almost pained. He has to shut his eyes.

“*No*,” Will says. Hannibal’s eyes open to meet his, wide and beseeching; he wonders with a kind of giddy, vertiginous fear how he must look. Will’s gaze is still devouringly hot; Will bends to lick a firm, deliberate stripe up across his leaking hole and Hannibal whines, desperate and unabashed. Will sucks at his rim, single-minded; rubs his face in it; the burn of his stubble is unspeakably pleasant; it feels like another claim; he feels so fully claimed it aches. Yet not claimed. Will makes a needy, hungry sound that Hannibal can feel through his entire body. He pulls back, runs his tongue over his lips. “You taste better than anything in the world,” Will says, there’s a flicker of hesitation, “Hannibal,” and Hannibal can see why he hesitated; he has never heard his name sound like that, like just saying it is a confession. Will shuts his eyes, plunges his tongue back in, thorough and single-minded; Will’s hand comes up to grip his cock, stroke him in time with the flicks of his tongue; he slides a hand down into Will’s hair, tangles it in his sweat-dampened curls, makes a noise that doesn’t sound human. The pleasure in him is building, like a stoked fire, twitching with sparks; a single touch more will undo him; he is tinder.

“*Will*,” he groans; it means a terrifying amount; it feels uprooted from inside him; he’s coming in a hot, sticky rush; some of it lands in Will’s hair; it is unexpectedly arousing to mark him. Will looks at him. Their eyes hold; he can smell fear on Will now, spreading, commingled with the notes of lust and possession and satisfaction. The fear smells cold and chemical, like menthol. It smells not unlike Will’s possessiveness. He’s not afraid of you, Hannibal thinks. He’s afraid of — losing you?

Will can tell he smells something.

Will crawls up the bed to him. Hannibal feels boneless and heavy. Contented. Sated. There is a deep, primal satisfaction in a part of his brain he is growing more intimate with. His alpha is here.

“Alpha,” he murmurs, without thinking.

“I’m here,” Will says. They slide into each other’s arms. He can smell rimy, chilly notes of panic spiked in Will’s scent; he feels strangely, primally, like it is his responsibility to soothe him. He thinks, I’m here, alpha, it’s all right. He can feel Will’s breathing grow slower, deeper; Will nuzzles more deeply into his neck. He thinks with a start about all the literature about omega appeasement gestures, their capacity to placate. He’s never done this before, *reassured* an *alpha* with his scent. Will inhales, curiously, then his scent becomes less jagged. He can feel Will’s breathing slow. Will buries his nose in his throat. Hannibal lets him. Will blinks at him. “Did you just—?”

“Not wholly deliberately,” Hannibal says. He feels strangely sheepish about it. He still thinks of omegas, their whole arsenal of strange biological gifts, as *them*, after all this time. Not *himself*. “It felt natural. Was it all right?”

“All *right*,” Will laughs, incredulous, utterly spent. “Was the Sistine Chapel all right?” He kisses Hannibal’s neck. It feels like a promise. “You have no idea what you could do to me, if you wanted to.”

Hannibal places a hand over his heart. Feels it beating. “I want to,” he says.

Chapter 10

Hannibal wakes slowly and then all at once, has to fight to hold himself still. Will is still deep in his arms, nose tucked into his neck; it feels so natural that his stomach plummets. Will stirs. His eyes blink open; he makes a pleased low noise in his throat, nestles closer. Hannibal turns his head, allows himself a long, stealthy inhale of the scent of Will waking up like this. Will smells primally *right,* dewy grass untroubled by footsteps. It is good like this, hearing his small intimate sounds, like an orchestra tuning itself to produce the music of his waking body. The dull flatness of his scent has evaporated or been cast off like a suit of armor; he smells fresh and warm, vividly alive.

He could get used to smelling Will in the morning, he thinks. There's something sweet and easy and peaceful about him. It feels unnatural that Will should be like this, after the wounds they have dealt each other. But here Will is. Will takes a long, pleased inhale too, glances knowingly up at him. *They got me too*, the look says.

Hannibal lets his eyes shut for just a moment. Soon day will creep in and they will have to be vigilant, vigilant of each other, vigilant of letting too much slip; he will smell everything that is wrong. But for now he can simply lie here a moment and dare to think *it could be like this*. Dare to think, *he's here, my alpha*. Before wakefulness intrudes.

"What time is it?" Will asks.

"Did you sleep well?" Hannibal says.

Will nods. "I didn't even dream." His voice turns suggestive. "You tired me out, omega."

"Good," Hannibal says. "Nearly nine o'clock."

"That late?" Will makes a small noise of discontent, noses against Hannibal's neck; it's where the bite mark would be, Hannibal notes. He shivers involuntarily. "I should go."

Hannibal stretches. He feels less stiff than he ought to, but still stiff. "Allow me to make you breakfast," he says.

*

The flaming corpse that rolls into Freddie Lounds' parking spot is spectacular.

"It's Freddie," Jack says. "Dental records match."

"How many people has she burned in her career?"

Hannibal feels Will's eyes on him, boring into him. Will feels more open, somehow. The falsehood in his delivery is almost theatrical. "Fire destroys," Will says, "and it creates. It's

mythical."

Their eyes catch on the word "mythical."

It all smells false, too sweet, too flat, oppressively thick. Will looks at him as though he knows it does.

Why, Hannibal thinks. He knows Will can smell his curiosity. *Why do you think*, Will's eyes say back.

He watches Will seeing him realize. There's a bleak confirmation in Will's eyes.

So Jack is lying to him too. Jack and Will, lying to him. Together. He feels cold. He thinks, *no*. The whole design is becoming visible. He can smell Will's — concern. Will is trying his best not to comfort him; strange that Will wants to.

He's trying not to let it show on his face, the building anger, the indignation.

When he leaves the lab he is nearly shaking. He passes closer to Will than he means to, draws a breath; Will's scent in his nostrils is soothing. It's the only thing that feels right. It is horrible, horrible.

*

He must think.

He is going to think. He paces the length of his office. This is what you have done to yourself, he thinks. You have made yourself this way for him. You could stop it.

No, he thinks. He – wanted you to see. He let you. So you could protect yourself.

So protect yourself.

To what end, he thinks. You're someone's omega now. You did this to yourself. You wanted this. You still want it, even when you can smell that something is off.

He and Jack are lying. Jack is still trying to catch you. And Will. *Your alpha*. He is working with Jack.

And then he thinks, *Jack doesn't know you know. Jack doesn't know he's letting you see*. Hope sparks to life like a flame in his cupped hands; he is terrified to fan it and terrified to let it go out. He let you see. He wanted you to see.

Perhaps he doesn't know what he wants.

You can still win, he thinks. You can still make yourself certain of him.

This vulnerability is an unfamiliar weapon, but it is a weapon, he thinks. Use it. See if he is any better at resisting his instincts than you are at resisting yours. If you are not stronger than this thing between you, how can he possibly be stronger?

*

Hannibal takes a deep, curious inhale when Margot arrives. “I believe congratulations are in order?”

“Yes,” she says. “Thank you. For the suggestion.”

“Have you notified the father?”

Margot makes a wry face. “I’ve always viewed men as an optional extra in child-rearing.”

“Anyone I know?”

“No,” Margot says. “Barely anyone I know.”

“Is Mason aware of the change in you?” Hannibal inquires.

“Of the first,” Margot says. “Not the second.”

Hannibal considers. “Are you certain?”

He watches Margot think. “I’m not certain,” she says. “But it’s hard to be certain.”

“Were I in your position, Margot,” Hannibal says, “I would not go home.”

“Not go home?”

“If it is safe there now, it will not be so for long.”

“I’m planning to leave,” Margot says.

“Plan to leave sooner.”

“I don’t suppose you’d have any suggestions where I should go?”

“I can offer you a place,” Hannibal says, “if you will do exactly as I tell you.”

*

“Dr. Lecter!” Mason Verger says. “You accepted my invitation.”

“I’m prone to old-world politeness,” Hannibal says. “Would have seemed rude not to.” Hannibal thinks, I dislike this. The way Mason looks at him, scents him. It feels like a cliche that Mason is an alpha. The way Mason clocks him as not a threat but as something *else*. Most people are not so overt about it. Mason scents him, just to point out he can, and he

wants to shudder with revulsion. He smells like bleach; unpleasant to take too much in at once.

“You were well brought-up,” Mason says. “Good breeding.”

“As a Verger,” Hannibal says. “You would know.”

Mason barks out a laugh. “Papa believed greatly in the importance of legacy,” Mason says.

“I can see that,” Hannibal says. “Vergers are noted expansionists.”

“Not Margot. Papa was always so disappointed with her – button-stitching.”

“These are remarkable pigs,” Hannibal says. “What is your ground note?” It is disconcerting and frustrating, the sense that Mason is not quite talking to him, but talking in some way around him, past him. He used to feel more opaque.

"Black Forest pigs," Mason says.

"Opportunistic omnivores," Hannibal says.

“You must know pigs as well as you know people, Dr. Lecter,” Mason says with exaggerated surprise. “I must have Carlo slaughter you a hog. A token of appreciation for all you do for Margot.”

“Any changes you note in Margot,” Hannibal says, “must be put to my credit.” All his remarks feel as though they're rolling off Mason's back harmlessly; he wonders if this one at least will take. “But I must insist on selecting my own pig."

*

He had forgotten that it would still be redolent of Will everywhere. His office. His kitchen. His dining room. Everything smells of *them.* Of his alpha and himself and the brute startling force of their desire. He is astounded at how many surfaces are already tainted.

His whole bedroom is a loss. It smells entirely of Will. Like Will has deliberately marked every surface in it.

He takes a long inhale. It's sweet. It's awful. He feels feral and deranged. It’s like heat but it’s — worse, somehow. Heat is merely his body; this is his soul. He feels like he’s missing a rib. He was sufficient to himself before.

He’s betraying you. You want him.

It would be so much worse if he claimed you, he thinks. The ache you feel now, smelling him — if he were in your head. If he were half your soul.

Would it be so much worse? he thinks.

You want him. You're not certain of him. He tosses and turns. Will is in his nostrils. The memory of Will is carved into every corridor of his mind; he catches echoes of his own desperate gasps, of Will's low musical grunts, in corners where he would have thought himself safe. There is nowhere safe. He feels consumed.

Go to him, he thinks. Make him feel it.

That isn't why you'd go to him. No, he admits. You would simply go to him because you cannot bear the pang of his absence; because you miss the shape you are together. Because it is dark and the bed is empty and the scent of him is unbearable and you *want*.

*

His fingers shake on the steering wheel as he drives. He arrives at Will's house in Wolf Trap, stops the car. Will emerges; his scent is perplexed, he is trying to seem forbidding but his scent is not unwelcoming; still a door opening, summer warmth leaking into his nostrils through the winter air around them. The night air that holds them is still and cold.

"You could have called," Will says.

Hannibal looks at him. "What would I have said?" Will's face is cast in shadows but he can spot the change when Will scents him, the simplicity of his purpose. That is an elegant way of putting it, he thinks. Very demure, very elevated. He knows that is not what Will smells. Will smells, *forget everything, just fuck me*. Will smells, *I need you*.

"*Oh*," Will says. "Come in."

"Could I have called?" Hannibal inquires, following him through the door.

Will's dogs stir nervously; Hannibal hears growls and gestures of protection; Will clicks his tongue at them. "Outside, everyone." They go. It's an effortless display of dominance, so casually *alpha* that it takes Hannibal's breath away. Will glances sidelong at him afterwards, almost a smirk, to say that he notices.

"I should tell you the same thing," Will says.

"You should," Hannibal says. "It is within your power to do so even now."

"No," Will says, looking at him, a little ruefully. "It isn't." He takes a long thirsty inhale. "Or yours, it smells like."

"Get on the bed," Hannibal says, "*alpha*."

Will looks at him. The look is burning, desire and incredulity; it humiliates you, the look says, to want it like this, but you're here, you couldn't stop yourself. How does it feel not to be able to stop yourself?

Will climbs onto the bed. Waits for another instruction. "You know," he says. "You know I'm lying to you."

“Get undressed,” Hannibal says. Will kicks off his shoes, starts shucking his shirt and undershirt. He reaches for the buckle of his pants. They don’t break eye contact. Hannibal swallows. The belt joins the shirt and undershirt on the floor.

“You know Jack’s lying,” Will says. “But you’re here.” He undoes his pants, pushes them down. Hannibal watches his cock spring free; there’s a lurch of familiarity and hunger and desperation. His boxers follow. Then Will is naked, kneeling up on the bed for him.

“On your back,” Hannibal says. He’s busy undoing his own clothes, tossing them onto the chair. He climbs naked onto the bed, looks down at Will, looms over him with a dominance he does not feel. Will holds himself still, looks up at him.

“You still want me,” Will says. Hannibal covers his mouth with a hand.

“Give me your knot, *alpha,*” Hannibal says; it comes out strangled and breathless.

“Come take it,” Will says. Hannibal straddles him, sinks down onto him; they both exhale simultaneously.

“Fuck,” Will says, “*Hannibal*.”

Hannibal whines with raw desire. He looks down at Will as he starts to find a rhythm, hips rolling steadily as he seats himself again and again. Will’s eyes on him are hungry; his scent is greedy. Hannibal feels enfolded by it. This house smells wonderfully, oppressively of Will. Of *alpha*. It is easy not to think here, to let his body take over, to simply take what he wants. Will looks almost more wrecked by it than he is; Will’s hands settle on his waist, on the ridge of his hip. Will thrusts up into him, like he’s desperate to be sheathed inside. Hannibal’s muscles burn pleasantly with the strain of setting the pace; he pulls Will up into a seated posture, braces himself against his shoulder, keeps riding him hard and fast. Will’s eyes on him feel like a weight, like pressure on a bruise, like a kiss on a bruise. Hannibal is simply taking him, carelessly, thoughtlessly, not gently; Will snarls as his hips snap down, as he chases the fulness; it shouldn’t be intimate but the way Will’s scent is wrapping around him, feels like it’s sinking into his pores, is overwhelming. Will smells like, *please*. Will smells like *anything you want*. Will smells willing to be used; there’s something primally alpha about it, like he’s pleased to provide himself, like as long as Hannibal comes to him he can take anything he wants. He smells stupefied with want. He looks— it’s unbearable. Like Hannibal is *his.* Like he can’t keep the knowledge out of his eyes.

“Close your eyes,” Hannibal says.

“*No*,” Will says. Hannibal snarls at him; Will snarls back. It rings through his whole body; he knows Will can feel the slick that it prompts. “Kiss me,” Will says.

“No,” Hannibal says. He fists a hand in Will’s hair, tugs him closer. He can feel Will’s breath on his mouth. Will wets his lips.

They look at each other, like this, not kissing. Will lifts a finger to his cheek; Hannibal turns his face away; it just has the effect of rubbing his whole face into Will’s hand, and that feels

more like a caress than what he was trying to avoid. Like he's marking Will with his scent. Like he's trying to rub Will's scent all over himself.

"Fuck," Will says. "I know."

"Alpha," Hannibal says.

"I know," Will says. Hannibal braces himself on Will's shoulders; Will buries his face in his neck, takes a gasping desperate inhale, then another. The bite mark has almost entirely faded. Will nips his throat, under his chin. Hannibal's eyes fall shut; another spasm of slick hits; they both groan. Will's arms come up around his back and just hold him. He can feel Will's knot starting to form; it feels so large; it always feels so large; it feels so good. He clenches down around it and Will makes a noise that almost sounds pained. Hannibal halts a moment, mid-thrust; Will shakes his head against his neck; his stubble burns against the faded bitemark. "Don't stop, *omega*," he says, "please don't stop."

Hannibal exhales sharply. He manages three more half-thrusts as Will's knot swells inside him; then Will is just holding him. He can feel the hot spasm of Will's release inside him. Will reaches for his cock and he bats the hand away. He takes himself in hand instead, strokes, looking at Will; he wants it to feel impersonal, simply their bodies making their crude demands felt, but it feels horribly intimate; Will's eyes on him as he chases his climax. He feels out of control. Will looks intrigued and possessive; Will's tongue slides out to wet his lips; and then he's coming, spattering Will's chest with it. Will growls in satisfaction. His eyes fall shut. Will is so willing it tears something in him; he feels more owned by it than if Will resisted, gave him commands, rubbed his face in it. Will simply taking it, letting himself be used, feels like a more terrifying confirmation that Will owns him than anything. Possession, he thinks, an object, a state of being, itself, its opposite.

*

He clambers off the bed, starts hunting for his clothes. Will lies there, chest rising and falling, still smeared with white. The scent is almost unbearably good, himself, on Will, their want mingled together. Hannibal pulls his shirt back on, starts buttoning it.

"Hannibal," Will says, suddenly. Hannibal looks at him. "Stay?"

It's almost worse than if it were a command. No, it's not almost worse; it's miles worse. *Your alpha wants you to stay*, he thinks. *But he's not asking.* "Then ask me to," Hannibal says.

"No," Will says. His mouth curves upward, wry. He stretches; the light catches on his body, on the mess on his chest; he looks marked; Hannibal feels marked by it.

"You are determined to strip me bare of all defenses," Hannibal says.

Will props himself up on an elbow. The thought of leaving this ruined, tousled, naked perfection, smelling like both of them, like mutual desire, and making his way back to his own empty bed – intolerable, Hannibal admits. His bed was not empty before; it was simply his bed. Will has made it empty. Hannibal looks at him; he feels frighteningly visible. "You would orphan your own desires," Will says, wry, "and make me their father."

“You possess me too utterly,” Hannibal says, “for them to be only mine and not yours.”

“I’m not denying them,” Will says. “Come back to bed, Hannibal. Please.”

“All right,” Hannibal says, “alpha.” He stops buttoning the shirt, sits down on the edge of the bed.

“I can smell it, you know,” Will says, quietly. He sits up, clambers over to where Hannibal is, begins undoing the buttons. “How much you dislike – needing this.” Hannibal lets the shirt fall from his shoulders.

“If it were only need,” Hannibal says, “it would be bearable.”

“Yes,” Will says. He rubs his forehead against Hannibal’s shoulder. “What are we going to do?”

“You say we,” Hannibal says.

“We’re just alike,” Will says. “And we’re both alone without each other. Old intentions, vengeance and reckonings and retributions set in motion on their tracks before—we came to understand that, can be stopped, or derailed.”

“Can Jack be derailed so easily?” Hannibal asks.

“No,” Will says. He settles his head against Hannibal’s shoulder. “We would have to stop him.”

“Does Jack know,” Hannibal asks, quietly; he can feel the soft stir of Will swallowing; Will’s palm slides up his back.

“Know what?” Will asks.

“What we are,” Hannibal says.

“I’ve denied it,” Will says. There’s no deception in his scent; but something faintly, itchily evasive lingers at the farthest edge. *Wrong*, Hannibal thinks.

Hannibal swallows. Will shakes his head. “Your scent changed,” he says. “I smell wrong to you, again, don’t I?”

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “Saccharine and flat.”

“Still sweet,” Will says.

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

“Too simple if the wanting vanished with the certainty.”

“You never smell simple,” Hannibal says. He pushes a hand through Will’s hair; it’s too benign a gesture. He should be able to twist and rip his head off. He should be able to tear

Will's chest open and wrap his fingers around Will's heart, valiantly clenching its fist of muscle beneath the vaulted ceiling of his ribs. He should be able to find where this thing is between them and wrench it out. He should want to wrench it out. It's terrifying that he doesn't want to, even now.

He smells something violent and sharp on Will that almost matches it. "I thought," Will says, "you were in control."

"Do you still think so?"

"I am starting to find it doesn't matter," Will says. "Even if you are." He sighs. "If Jack doesn't trust me any more, I won't be able to protect you."

"Is that what you're doing?" Hannibal says. "Protecting me? As you protected me from Ms. Lounds' allegations?"

"If I just did everything that you wanted," Will says, "I'd get us both caught."

"You believed," Hannibal says, level, "that you wished to see me caught. You set a trap for me. Would it still feel like justice?"

"Yes," Will says, "but I don't know if justice is what I want." He lies down on his side facing Hannibal, and Hannibal follows; their bodies form a set of closed parentheses.

"No justice here," Hannibal says. He reaches over and traces a finger through the mess on Will's chest; Will looks knowingly at him, at the transparent possessiveness of the gesture. He snorts.

"No," Will says. "Just us."

"What was Orpheus's crime?" Hannibal asks.

"When he lost Eurydice to hell," Will says, "or when he got torn limb from limb and cast into a river?"

"Which seems more edifying?"

"Loving incorrectly," Will says.

"A broad category of error," Hannibal says.

"You meant uncertainty," Will says.

"Is that not the same?" Hannibal asks.

"To be uncertain is to love incorrectly?" Will asks. "Then loving correctly is impossible."

"Is it?" Hannibal says.

"I know you can't be certain of me," Will says. "I've made it impossible."

Hannibal looks at him. “I am trying to be certain.”

“And I can’t be certain of you.”

“You could choose to be.”

“That isn’t what you’re doing,” Will says. “I know you. You’re concocting tests, you’re planning — you’re not surrendering, Dr. Lecter.

“A city may be well fortified and formidable,” Hannibal says, “but if there is no one to man the walls it is of scant importance.”

Will laughs, ruefully. “Are your walls manned?”

“The walls bristle with arms but my gates are open to you,” Hannibal says. “You know they are.”

“Not all of them.” Will sighs. "I'd better let everyone in. Will you stay?"

Hannibal nods. "I'll stay."

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal has awakened before in strange beds; this is the first time he has had to remind himself that the bed was strange. *Oh*, he thinks, with a strange calm, *it's all over for you, isn't it? He's it.* There is a bitter satisfaction in completely understanding his own predicament in an abstract way, in observing his own thoughts from without. He feels like a doctor diagnosing his own fatal disease. Will stirs, presses back against him. In sleep Will twisted away from him but kept hold of him; that accounts for their position now, Will curled companionably inside the circle of his arm. The arm beneath Will is asleep; it prickles like static electricity when he stirs. He settles closer to Will, chest pressed against his back, where he can feel his heart beating. Will runs hot. He's warmer than the rest of the bed.

He has made plans, clever, intricate plans, in the hopes that Will will respond to influence, will choose correctly. But even if Will does not, he thinks, it is over. He allows himself to take a deep inhale at the nape of Will's neck, nose buried in his curls. He smells sweet and alive, honeysuckle and thyme, dawn breaking over a peaceable kingdom where lions and lambs lie down together. A place so beautifully illustrated, he thinks, that you have started to believe it really exists. These thoughts are maudlin. There was some point when he started to be necessary to you, he thinks; if only you'd noticed when it was, so you could have been frank with yourself about it. Now he's air and light; you can't do without him.

On the floor by the fireplace the dogs shift in their sleep. The house creaks. Will stirs awake, twists to face him. "Morning, omega," he says. It's casual and possessive and deliberate, like Will is trying out the shape of it in his mouth. He looks satisfied with it.

"Good morning, alpha," Hannibal says, as deliberately, back.

"Awful," Will says, wry. His eyes crinkle warmly at the edges. "I hate it from you."

"Terrible," Hannibal agrees.

Will kisses him, quick, sweet, a little lingering. "I'll make coffee."

*

The morning is strangely mundane, strangely pleasant; he and Will keep staring at each other through the bars of it. Here we are, eating scrambled eggs out of mismatched bowls, blowing on mugs of hot coffee, dogs milling about at our feet, as though any of it were that simple. Here I am, looking at you, liking it.

Will takes the empty bowl from him, kisses his cheek on his way to depositing it in the sink. "Thought everyone was going to be more disturbed by you than they were."

“You forget we are acquainted,” Hannibal says.

“Still,” Will says, “I don’t exactly specialize in overnight guests.”

Hannibal looks down at the threadbare set of pajama bottoms he has been lent, manages to make it deadpan. “No?”

Will smiles. “No.” He can smell it on Will, that it feels *right* to him, having him here in the midst of everything else that belongs to him, can see him remeasuring the shape of everything with Hannibal in it. Can tell that he’s trying not to; his scent is bursts of warmth, fondness blowing through like a sirocco freighted with flowers, and then stabs of cold, like a man sliding along an icy surface failing to find purchase. Will is pleased, he doesn’t want to be, he can’t help it. Their eyes catch and hold.

“Do you wish we didn’t know this about each other?”

Will smiles. It’s rueful and fond at the same time. He smells amused. “Of course.” He leans over the breakfast table to kiss him. “But you’re determined to leave tracks all over everything.”

“The difference between solitude and loneliness,” Hannibal says.

“Before you and after you,” Will says. “You’re going through my whole life, leaving holes in it.”

“So are you,” Hannibal says. “My bed was not empty before. The stamp of your presence is everywhere.”

Will traces a finger down his cheek. “You weren’t… like this before.”

“No,” Hannibal says. The thing between them feels strange, strong and fragile at once. “This is my becoming, of a kind.”

“And it’s mine,” Will says.

“If you let it be,” Hannibal says.

“What if I said yes?” Will says. “Yes to all of it? What would you want me to become?”

“Yourself,” Hannibal says.

“Your alpha,” Will says. “Not exactly the same as myself.”

“Aren’t they?”

“I’m not sure I could live with you in my head all the time,” Will says. “Knowing everything you want. Everything you’ve done.” He looks down. “Everyone you’ve hurt.”

“Perhaps it would not be so bad as you imagine,” Hannibal says, carefully. He thinks of Abigail, struggling her way through the Mozart. He wonders what Will can smell on him.

Whatever it is makes Will look up, puzzled. He smells something cool and brackish, like seawater, hope and terror mixed. “If you claim me,” Hannibal says, “we will have no secrets from each other.”

Will takes another sip of coffee, looks at him over the mug. “You’d hate that.”

*

He hears barking as he gets out of the shower. He towels off his hair and listens; someone is at the door. Will goes to open it. Hannibal tugs the towel up over his hips.

It’s Alana and her new dog, both of them with their ears pricked up watchfully.

“Do we do friendly visits any more?” Will asks.

“This isn’t a friendly visit,” Alana says. She frowns. “Hannibal’s here.”

“Yes,” Will says. He smiles grimly. “But you knew that, Alana. You saw the car.”

“Yes,” Alana says. “I saw the car.”

Hannibal contemplates making his way to the door like this, just to see what will happen, if he lets Alana see them together, smell them on each other. He is curious. He makes his way through the living room to the door, stands behind Will. It is not particularly subtle. He smells like Will’s soap and beneath the soap, Will. The towel hangs off his hips.

“I made coffee,” Will suggests.

“I’m not staying,” Alana says. She looks at Hannibal. Her scent is sharper today, not as diffuse, hot spiky rubbery notes of pity and outrage; there’s still a twist of well-disguised revulsion in her expression. Her eyes look sorry for him. He can feel Will go tense as he takes it all in, bristles at it. He can smell the recklessness on him before Will makes a move. He’s not surprised when Will’s arm slides around his waist. He is surprised when Will bends his head and kisses his neck. It’s intimate and brazen at the same time. Alana flinches. She works hard to school her expression. Hannibal doesn’t look down, holds her gaze. He can tell that she wants to say something to him, *he doesn’t get to do this to you*; he leans into the contact instead, intertwines his fingers with Will’s. He’s sure she can smell the defiance on him.

“What do you want, Alana?” Will asks.

“I wanted to convince myself of something,” Alana says. “That you didn’t murder Freddie Lounds.”

“What do you think?” Will asks. It is strange to watch Alana supply the gaps in Will’s scent with something altogether different than he has put in them himself.

“I think that’s not a very good answer for someone who’s already wondering what you’re capable of.” Alana turns to Hannibal directly. “You don’t seem bothered.”

He feels Will looking at him.

“By your suspicion?” he asks. “Or the fate of Ms. Lounds?”

“Either!” Alana says. “Both!” She’s vibrating with indignation. “When I look at the two of you I see – something I don’t recognize.”

Will snorts. Hannibal can smell his bitter amusement. “Well,” he says, “you’re the only one.”

“Hannibal,” Alana says. “I hate saying this in these circumstances, but I have to say it.” He knows she is aware of the minefield here, of the perils of a direct challenge; he is impressed by her ability to stand her ground. Next to him, Will bristles. His grip tightens. “I told you I would be a constant. I believe that this is not healthy. I believe that you have been influenced and that you are behaving in ways you wouldn’t recognize. As your friend and your colleague, I am urging you to step back from this.”

“You don’t think I’m a good alpha for him,” Will says, “because you think I’m a killer.”

“You’re not his alpha,” Alana says.

“Not yet,” Hannibal says. He inclines his head. Alana flinches.

“I think it’s hard for you, right now, to know what you want. Either of you.” She tugs the leash. “Come on, Applesauce.”

*

Will shuts the door to Jack’s office behind him. Jack looks up at him.

“Care to explain?” Jack says.

“Explain what?” Will asks.

“Why you told Freddie Lounds the opposite of what you’ve been telling me?”

“Jack, you know Freddie can’t be trusted,” Will says.

“What about Alana Bloom?” Jack says. “Can she be trusted?”

Will freezes.

“Why lie to me about it?”

“I didn’t mean to lie,” Will says. Jack looks hard at him.

“Jesus,” Jack says. He rubs the bridge of his nose. “Jesus, Will. You said you had it under control.”

“I did,” Will says, “until I, uh, I didn’t.”

“What am I supposed to do with this information?” Jack says.

“What do you want to do with it, Jack?”

Jack frowns. There’s a long silence. “You tell me,” Jack says. “I’m going to tread delicately here, but – we know how dangerous he is. If you think you have leverage that can help us stop him, catch him—”

“I don’t know what I have!” Will says, discomfort radiating off him in waves.

“You have something he wants,” Jack says. “You’re fishing. You’re using it.”

“I don’t have *something* he wants, Jack,” Will says. “I have *me*. He wants *me*.”

“Then use it,” Jack says. “Set a trap. Have him invite me to dinner.”

“He’ll see through it.”

“That’s why I have you to hide the hook,” Jack says. “You killed someone, Will. I am out on a limb. I need something.”

“He’s given me nothing,” Will says. “Barely anything. Vagaries.”

“But he’s trying to lure you in, too,” Jack says. “What’s he trying to offer? What does he have that you want?”

Will rubs his forehead with his thumb and forefinger. “Do I have to say it, Jack?”

“You have to,” Jack says.

“Acceptance,” Will says.

“I can offer you something better than that,” Jack says. “Justice. Just give me Hannibal.”

“What does it profit a man to gain the whole world?” Will asks, his mouth twists, “if he lose his soul?”

Jack nods, emphatically. “Precisely.”

“Well, fuck,” Will says, when he’s out of earshot of Jack.

*

“We could have had this conversation at home,” Abigail says. “But we’re having it here, in your office.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

“Who’s your next appointment?” Abigail asks. “Is it Will?”

“What makes you think that it is?”

“I knew it was,” Abigail says. “You know you have more tells now than you think you do.”

“You don’t know how many I think I have.”

“It’s more,” Abigail says. “You said we would talk about colleges.”

“Would you consider college in Europe?” Hannibal asks.

“Pretty far cry from St. Cloud on the Mississippi,” Abigail says.

“Yes.”

“I should consider it,” Abigail says, “or is it my only option?”

“I will not deny that it would be more convenient if you came to the decision on your own.”

“Are we leaving the country?”

“We may be,” Hannibal says.

“Lots of changes for us,” Abigail says. “Is Will coming?”

Hannibal swallows. “I am not certain.”

Abigail looks at him, takes a curious inhale. “You really don’t know, do you?” She picks up a scalpel from the desk, stares at it, puts it back. “Do any of them have brochures?”

“Of course.”

“Let’s look at brochures,” Abigail says.

*

“Tell me,” Hannibal says. He pours Will a glass of wine, then another for himself. “What would you do if your omega were threatened?”

“My omega,” Will says. “Threatened? Then it couldn’t be you, could it? You scarcely need protection.”

“I have been threatened before,” Hannibal says. “In this very office. Patients have brought violence here. Earlier today the brother of a patient threatened me.”

Will growls. Then looks displeased with himself. He comes to stand by the fireplace. “Margot Verger’s brother?” Will asks. Hannibal inclines his head. “What web are you weaving with him?”

“Must I be weaving some web?”

Will smiles. It's almost *fond*. "Always," he says. "Always, Dr. Lecter."

"Suppose he were to take me from this very office," Hannibal says. "Threaten my life for meddling in his affairs."

"Would you deserve it?" Will asks. He smells inescapably fond now.

"Would it matter if I deserved it?" Hannibal asks.

"Of course," Will says.

"To you?"

They both know the answer to this question; Will simply looks at him. "So this is what you want," he says. "A demonstration. To be certain."

"In ancient Athens," Hannibal says, "Harmodius and his alpha Aristogeiton slew the tyrant Hipparchus together. As a pledge to one another, before the bond. A brutal act that became the stuff of poetry, legend, and art."

"Hipparchus wasn't really the tyrant, though, was he?" Will says. "It was his brother Hippias. It wasn't a blow for democracy. Aristogeiton was just being territorial."

"That is not the legend," Hannibal says.

"But it is the truth," Will says.

"Truth is malleable," Hannibal says. "The Athenians preferred the other truth. They built statues to the lovers. They considered it a highly eloquent act. To kill together, as one. The statues were to give encouragement to others to do likewise." He glances up at Will, not quite deferentially. The firelight is caught in the hollow of Will's throat, it gilds his jaw, his brow. His eyes look dark in the shifting light.

"Would you feel more certain of me if we did likewise?" Will asks.

"Wouldn't you?" Hannibal asks.

Will looks at him. Takes a long inhale. "You think you need the violence to be certain of me."

"What do you need?" Hannibal says.

Will shakes his head. "What I would ask isn't possible," he says.

"Ask."

Will sighs. "You can't reverse time," he says.

Hannibal nods. "Abigail stands between us."

"Not just Abigail," Will says. "All the people you've killed. All the devastation you've wrought."

“She is a wall. They are a bridge.”

“Sometimes,” Will says, “I still smell her. It’s like— she was just in this room. Like she sat in this chair.” Will’s eyes on him are heavy. Will’s scent is a question.

“Occasionally, on purpose, I drop a teacup to the floor just to see it shatter,” Hannibal says. “I’m always disappointed when it doesn’t gather itself together again. Someday, perhaps, a cup may come together.”

Will looks at him. “In quantum mechanics there is the possibility, on occasion, that a wall may be a door.”

“A thermodynamic miracle.”

Will takes a long inhale.

“What do you smell?” Hannibal asks.

Will’s scent hardens, freezes. “One game too many, Hannibal.” He settles on the edge of the desk. Picks up a scalpel, toys with it. Puts it down. “Jack wants you to ask him to dinner,” he says. “Two birds, one stone.”

“Depending upon who is the bird and who is the stone.”

Will looks at him. It’s a searching, heated look, like Will is trying to pry up the floorboards of his mind.

“Is that also what you want?” Hannibal asks. He comes and sits on the desk next to Will, inclines his head deliberately.

“You’ll be certain of me then,” Will says.

*

“I left a note for him,” Margot says. “Like you said. I hope you can handle yourself, Dr. Lecter. Mason has obtained the services of a man in a Tyrolean hat.”

“I will be careful,” Hannibal says. “Good luck, Margot.”

Margot halts, toying with the button of her coat. “A getaway vehicle. A hideout. I’m at something of a loss how to thank you, Dr. Lecter.” She smiles. “You are certainly setting a new standard of care.”

How fascinating, Hannibal thinks, that this appears as kindness when viewed from a certain perspective. Kindness, self-sacrifice, altruism. “You will find the keys under the mat.”

He sharpens his pencil with the scalpel, resumes sketching. It is Achilles mourning the death of Patroclus, after the Nikolai Ge.

*

“He’s asking you,” Will says.

Jack smiles. “Good.”

“He is a wonderful cook,” Will says. Jack chuckles. “After all this, wouldn’t it be funny if someone else got him first?”

“Someone else?” Jack asks. “Who?”

“A patient of his,” Will says, “Mason Verger, has involved him in some family trouble.”

“Is he trying to involve you?”

“Me?” Will asks. “No. Unless you think at the first hint of danger to Hannibal Lecter instinct demands that I go running, teeth bared, to deal out violent blows to all and sundry.”

“Don’t get too cute,” Jack says. “But I have good news, Will. It’s not just you and me any more. I have another witness.”

*

“Dr. DuMaurier,” Will says.

“Will Graham,” Bedelia says. She looks levelly at him, inhales carefully. “I always wondered what it would be like to meet Hannibal’s alpha.”

“We’ve met,” Will says.

“You were not his alpha then,” Bedelia says.

“I’m still not,” Will says.

“No,” Bedelia agrees. “Not technically.” They look at each other. Will can feel Jack’s eyes on him through the glass of the interrogation room. “But I think you are past the point of deluding yourself that that means anything.”

“Biologically,” Will says, “it does mean something. I don’t know what he’s thinking. I can live without him.”

“Don’t you?” Bedelia says. “Can you?” She looks down at her hands, then up at him again, past him at the window where Jack is watching them. Will is aware she can smell the wash of mortified frustration on him.

“Hannibal doesn’t want an alpha,” Will says. “He’s… too private. I have to think that this is manipulation on his part.”

“You have to think it,” Bedelia says, “why?”

“Everything I know about his nature,” Will says, “suggests that it’s manipulation.”

“You refuse to entertain the possibility that he would *change* his nature,” Bedelia says. “Willingly. That he is changing it for you.”

“That would really be terrifying,” Will says. “Wouldn’t it?”

“Why does that terrify you more than the alternative?”

“I know who Hannibal is,” Will says. “I know who I am. I don’t know—what *we* are.” He knows she can smell the discomfort on him. “What he would make me.”

“Don’t you?” Bedelia asks. “Or are you afraid to?”

“Why would he – let me change him?”

“Why,” Bedelia quotes, “was I born without a skin, that I must wear armor to touch or be touched?”

He can feel Jack’s eyes on him, catching his flinch.

“Is this the FBI’s plan?” Bedelia says. “To let you have him and then hope you’ll want to give him up?” She looks past him. “Or was your falling in love not part of the plan?”

Will pushes back his chair. “I’m not in love with him, Bedelia.”

Bedelia smirks. “Who are you lying to?” she asks. “And why? Do you even know yourself?”

*

“What does she mean?” Jack asks.

“Not now, Jack,” Will says.

“I think it might need to be now,” Jack says. “Can I trust you, or can’t I?”

“Jack,” Will says, “why would I still be here, if you couldn’t?”

“I’d like more of an answer than that,” Jack says. “We are playing this your way. We don’t have to be.”

“No, we’re not,” Will says. “We’re playing this your way.”

“I didn’t tell you to sleep with him,” Jack says.

“It was implied,” Will says.

“I would know if it was implied,” Jack says. “And I wasn’t implying it.”

“You’re the one who said it could be useful,” Will says. “We’re both out on limbs here, Jack. There’s a plan. We’re sticking to the plan. I’m still your best shot at him. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’m late for my therapy appointment.”

*

“Enough beating around the bush,” Mason says. “Not to make a crass allusion to Margot’s extracurriculars.”

“How deftly you avoided making such an allusion.”

“Where is she?” Mason asks.

“I can’t give you the answer to that,” Hannibal says, “for the simple reason that I do not know it myself.”

“You meddled, Dr. Lecter,” Mason says. “Put ideas into Margot."

"Margot is quite capable of conceiving of ideas on her own."

“Conceiving more than that, I’m afraid.”

“I don’t know what you mean.”

“Don’t play coy, Dr. Lecter,” Mason says. “Not now. We traced her car here. It’s parked outside.”

“Then you doubtless have a better idea where to find her than I do,” Hannibal says.

“Not just her,” Mason says. “There’s a passenger on board.”

“On board the car?”

“On board Margot. You saw to that.”

“You’ll have an heir to carry on the family name.”

“I’ll have an heir only if I die,” Mason says. He gets up. “I asked nicely, Dr. Lecter.” he says. “Next I will send someone who won’t ask nicely.” Mason walks to the door.

“Was this asking nicely?” Hannibal inquires.

*

Not so nicely arrives in a Tyrolean hat. Hannibal resists, just enough to leave blood on the flood. Just enough for verisimilitude. He looks at his watch as they drag him out. Just on time.

Chapter End Notes

sorry about the slight delay in updating! this was a beast to get into shape because the remaining chapters depended on its plot dominoes being in the right order! thank you for all the comments and encouragement, i have so appreciated them!

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal is not in the office. The office has been ransacked. Hannibal is not there.

Will can smell — not fear, of course not fear. Amusement, curiosity. Surprise. There is blood in the corner; a body has been dragged. The contents of the desk have been disturbed.

It smells like—

“Abigail?” Will asks.

“Hello,” Abigail says. She is sitting on the library balcony leafing through a book labeled “DRUGS.”

“The title overpromises,” Will says.

“No kidding.”

“Where’s Hannibal?”

“He got himself kidnapped,” Abigail says. “Really pissed off Mason Verger? He wanted to be sure I told you. You don’t seem surprised to see me.”

“I kept smelling you here,” Will says. “I hoped he would tell me.”

“Couldn’t you have asked?”

“I didn’t want to ask,” Will says. “I wanted him to tell me.”

“He likes to play games,” Abigail says.

“Always,” Will says. “It’s good to see you, Abigail. Are you —” He pulls a face. “All right?”

“He’s teaching me to play piano,” Abigail says. “He let me decorate my room. I can see the ocean from my window.” She smiles. “It’s like a very weird resort.”

“He could have told me.” Will scrubs his hands over his face. There’s blood in one corner of the room, near the fireplace. It isn’t all Hannibal’s, but some of it is. “But he has to have his grand gestures. He wanted me to know what was at stake.”

“Am I at stake?”

“You matter to me,” Will says. “He knows that.”

“You thought I was dead.”

Will smiles, ruefully. “I’m glad you’re not.”

“Me too.”

“Always a game,” Will says. “Always a plan.” He shakes his head. “Always in control, even when he’s not.”

“Do you think that?” Abigail says.

“All of this has been his design,” Will says.

Abigail looks at him. “You’re not.” She shrugs, turns the book over. “Anyway this all assumes he makes it back from Muskrat Farm.”

Will paces the length of the office. The blood smell lingers on the air. His body is starting to respond to it, alarms are jangling in his brain. “How many of them were there?” Will asks. “When did they take him?”

“You’re getting agitated,” Abigail says. She snaps the book shut. “Worried about your *omega?”*

Will growls. Then looks sheepish. “Yes,” he says, quietly, honestly.

“It must be strange,” Abigail says, “worrying about *him.”*

“It’s very strange,” Will says. “It’s like having a piece of your soul cut off and wandering around.”

“I meant that it’s Hannibal.”

Will sighs. “That’s the only thing that isn’t strange.” He buttons his coat. “You’ll be okay here?”

“You going to *rescue* him?” Abigail gestures airily. “Bite the throats out of anyone who stands in your way?”

“Tooth-rottingly traditional,” Will says, “isn’t it?”

Abigail nods. “I’ll be okay. Got this cool book about DRUGS.”

*

Something primal beats like a drum under all his rational thoughts: *he is in danger. My omega is in danger*. He’s not your omega, Will thinks sharply. He’s Hannibal Lecter. He’s more than capable of taking care of himself. He’s doing this to see what you will do. To see if you will go to him. This is all his design.

You’re not.

All the time he is thinking this he is in the car on the road to Muskrat Farm. Adrenaline hums beneath his skin. His fingers drum on the wheel. He's speeding, as much as a Volvo permits.

Is there any limit to what you would do to protect him. The question echoes in his mind. Is there.

How many people will you have to hurt to make certain he is safe?

His mind curls around the question with a bitter amusement. How many are there? he thinks.

*

Hannibal could not be more vulnerable; he is barefoot and straitjacketed and dangling precariously close to an enclosure of man-eating pigs. Mason and two men in thick wool jackets with grim expressions are trying to wring Margot's whereabouts out of him.

There are ways of killing these men, and Hannibal thinks about them. There are ways of struggling out of the straitjacket, and Hannibal thinks about them. There are ways of escaping the danger on his own, and Hannibal thinks about them.

And then he smells *his alpha*, and he stops thinking.

There must have been more men out there, he thinks. He smells violence on Will. Exquisite, purposeful, direct. He smells like a storm breaking, the sharp ozone smell of lightning cutting through the gathered thickness of the air. He smells *right* like this. See, Hannibal wants to say. See how magnificent you are.

Will sees him, trussed and hung, and first he scents panic, and the panic smells unbearably sweet. His alpha is worried for him. His alpha is going to kill anyone who tries to harm him. It is primal and intoxicating. Will is here to protect him. He takes the steps up to the platform two at a time.

"Is this yours?" Mason asks.

"He's mine," Will says. The men turn menacingly towards him, waiting on a word from Mason. They are betas, Hannibal thinks; they see the blood but they don't know how terrifying he smells. Mason knows. Will looks at Hannibal. Takes a step closer. Blood is sliding sluggishly down a cut on Hannibal's face; there is blood in his hair; and he can smell the delicious spike of concern, fresh and sharp like grass cut with a scythe. "Here I am," Will says. *See*, his scent screams. *Look what I've done for you.* "Just like you wanted."

Hannibal inhales. And, oh, Will is not lying. There is blood on him and not all of it is his. Most of it isn't. He smells how Will wants to hate it. How he – doesn't hate it. There's something hot and tangled, frustration, but also a clean hot metallic scent, like a weapon steaming with gore. Will smells a little furtive about how much he likes it. *Alpha*, Hannibal thinks.

Mason holds up a hand. "One favor, before you take him off our hands. I regret to say that he has been singularly unforthcoming on the subject of my sister's whereabouts. I'm sure he'll

be more willing to tell if his alpha asks."

"No," Will says.

"No?" Mason says. "Any particular reason?"

Will shrugs. "I don't want to."

"Oh," Mason says. "Well. In that case." He pushes the button to send Hannibal swinging out over the pig enclosure. Will seizes the moment to slice the straitjacket open. As he swings out Hannibal sees that two more of Mason's heavies are climbing up the steps onto the platform.

"Behind you," he shouts.

Will turns in response, elbows one of them in the throat. He can tell that Will is conscious of being watched as he does this, that the flavor of the violence is enhanced by the presence of its beneficiary. That it should be distracting but it's clarifying instead.

They are bigger than he is and they have guns but the odds feel even. Will's fist pulps into a face; blood arcs into the air in a fountain spray. Will's teeth sink into a throat and emerge bloody. It feels different to watch Will doing this, knowing that he is being watched. There's a brutal elegance to it; a poem composed of tearing sinews and cracking bone. Will wants it to only be desperate but it is lavish, a terrible music that Will was born to play, that Hannibal has managed to coax out of him. Will smells like surrender. Like if he is going to do this he will do everything. Hannibal thinks of the man in the Russian fairy tale who kept his foot tied up so that he did not encompass the whole world in a step. What a relief to untie his foot and take the step. What a terrible, wonderful relief. Will, splendid and bloody, giving in to his instincts, is a thing almost too bright to look at for too long. He feels like Semele, like seeing it will cause him to combust.

Will looks up at him, knowingly; their eyes catch for just a moment. This is what you wanted, the look says. I smell it on you, I see your design in this. I know what this does to you.

Hannibal can't deny it. There is a frustrated fondness threaded through Will's scent. Even amidst the triumphant steam of his rage there is something startled, shy, *and this doesn't appall you? Here is what you want; are you certain that you want it?*

It is strange to smell Will trying not to be seen enjoying himself; sometimes he forgets and indulges and his scent thickens and sharpens and coils into Hannibal's nostrils. Will is trying to make it a performance but he can't hide the delight when his teeth sink into vulnerable skin; when flesh tears under his hands. His instincts are strong and they are exquisite. He is a prodigy, unrehearsed. And he can smell Will's frustration at his pride, his interest. This was the danger, he thinks. That Will would think this was all your idea and not notice himself reveling in it. That he would see your direction and not his performance.

The cable has almost exhausted itself. He hears the pigs beneath him. Even as he's scrambling to get his hands free, he has difficulty tearing his eyes away. It feels like sacrilege, to miss a moment of it, this serenade performed for him alone. It is the murky music of an organ on which Will has willfully tugged out all the stops.

Will makes it to the button that will reverse the pulley and hits it.

The last of Mason's henchmen collapses to his knees beside him; Will strikes a blow to his skull that cracks and echoes like lightning. He looks up, panting. Magnificent. Limned in red. Hannibal can scarcely breathe as the pulley begins to bear him back.

"Did it feel good?" Hannibal asks, as he comes to a halt. "Protecting me?"

"You know how it felt," Will says. He inhales; makes a face. "Stop—smelling like that. Now would be a bad time."

"To lose your focus?" Mason asks. It was a mistake to neglect Mason. He catches Will on the back of the head and Will crumples.

Hannibal thinks of all the ways of tormenting him for it. It will be a pleasure to protect his alpha.

He slips free of the cable.

*

He makes short work of the men. If they were going to revive before, they will not any longer. Not once the pigs are through with them.

He debates what to do with Mason. It would be easier for Margot to leave him alive. But he has little desire to be merciful.

Bring him for Will, he thinks. Let him choose.

He amuses himself with Mason while waiting for Will to arrive.

*

"Murder or mercy?" Hannibal asks.

Will still smells like a jungle fire, scent hot and thick and dangerous, suffocating. Hannibal feels pricklingly, vividly aware of him. Of the fact that there is blood on his coat. On his face. In his hair. He smells magnificently *alpha*, resplendent in his violence. He smells frustrated, too. The note of exasperated surrender to his own impulses is back.

Mason is bloody, full of himself, enthroned in Will's singular armchair. Hannibal looks curiously at Will. Hannibal has been perhaps too intricate in his punishment, but Will smells… intrigued, not put off.

"Do what you think is best for him, Doctor," Will says, fond and permissive and suggestive. Hannibal can smell the desire on him. Will wants to watch him. But the desire is cut with

something else, icy and slippery.

Hannibal steps over to Mason and snaps his spine with effortless, brutal efficiency. He hears Will's instinctive, proud, guttural growl. Hannibal wants to bask in it. He touches his fingers carefully to feel for Mason's pulse and startles a little at the noise Will makes.

He can scent the change in Will almost the moment it happens. It's sharp and sulfuric at first, like a match igniting. It smells like someone setting fire to an antique book, the smell of the thing that is burning is familiar and costly. There were sentences there, before, legible and bold, and now the hot mouths of the flames have engulfed them; there is only heat. He knows the word for this before it leaves his lips. This, he was not expecting.

He looks over. Will is starting to perspire; his face glistens with sweat at the temples; his eyes look almost entirely black.

"Will?" he says.

Will's eyes manage to be knowing for all that they are blown wide with desire. "Of course," he says.

"Here?"

"Here," Will grunts; his voice barely sounds human. "Right here."

Hannibal looks at him as casually as he can muster; his head is already inclining, deferentially. "The bed?" he asks.

"The floor," Will says. "Right here."

"I must confess, it was not my *intention* to drive you into rut," Hannibal says. He stands obediently a few inches from the chair, head inclined, in a way that signals that the floor is his very next destination. He can smell it all over Will now, hot and thick, animal desperation. There is a quiet exultation building in him. I did this, he thinks, it is I who makes him so.

Will snorts. "Liar," he says. It sounds *fond*, somehow. Beneath the volcanic surge of heat, the knife-edge sharpness, he can smell the fondness, too, twisting like ivy. Even the flames smell green. Will's fingers are white-knuckled in the fabric of his coat, like he's holding himself in place by sheer effort. His face contorts; he looks almost taken aback at the force of his own desire, like something alien to himself that has seized hold of him. Hannibal feels the slick starting to coat his thighs at the unabashed, raw hunger he can smell. "Strip," Will says, "if you care about that suit."

Hannibal looks at him to see if he will say anything else; the word hovers on his lips, Will licks them, and then he says, "Strip, *Hannibal*." But when he says it like that "Hannibal" means something else; it means, *omega*, it means, you're mine to do with as I want, it means, the omega that belongs to me. It should be humiliating to hear his name used like that but it also feels like a miracle, that his name has acquired that specific meaning in someone's mouth. He throws his coat to the ground and he's on his knees before he can say anything else, toeing off his shoes, unfastening his jacket, undoing his shirt, tossing his belt to the

ground. He can hear the sounds of Will doing the same thing, faint thuds of clothing hitting the floor. Will's scent is strong, sharp like this, it feels almost like a physical touch, like drawing it into his nostrils is a kind of penetration. He thinks of the Bible verse, *pride is a stench in the nostrils of God*, and whimpers. Then Will is on him, pulling him into his arms, kissing him — he tries to salvage thoughts, to mark this aside for future contemplation; is it natural to have such an urge in rut? — and he is kissing back, hungrily, grateful that it's permitted. Will nips him under the chin. It looks like he's trying to form words.

"Tell me what you need," Hannibal breathes. But Will just kisses him again, rocks him onto his back, pushes his knees up. It's uncomfortable but more intimate than he was expecting. He marks this aside too. Will slides two fingers into him; they come out wet and dripping and Will licks them with elaborate satisfaction before plunging into him. He can feel Will's burgeoning knot already. Will's eyes are blown wide and dark. Will kisses him again. The thrusts are punishing; Will is growling into his mouth; the kisses become bites; Hannibal feels light-headed with arousal. Will's scent is impossibly strong, everywhere. He sniffs the juncture of Will's throat where it's strongest. Will thrusts home; the knot in him swells. "*Will*," he breathes, and it sounds like *alpha*. It sounds like, *use me, only me, let me take everything you have to give.* Will throws back his head and *howls* in sheer pleasure and he can feel the knot inside him pulse, the hot, thick flood of uncomfortable fullness that follows it.

They lie there panting for what feels like no time at all and an eternity as Will's knot subsides. And then Will withdraws; Hannibal hears the small whine of disappointment that escapes his own lips. Will pushes him onto his stomach and then Will is in him again, pulling his hips up where he wants them, Will is draped warmly over his back. Will smells like self-indulgence, like he has given up fighting himself. It's a wonderful scent, rich and detailed. Hannibal feels slick gathering on his thighs. "You feel so good," Will whispers into the back of his neck, like it's a secret, and Hannibal bares his throat eagerly. "You seem eager enough."

"Would you like me to beg?"

"Please," Will says, not without irony, biting his earlobe. Will withdraws his hips and Hannibal keens.

"Please," he says. "Give me your knot." Will nips correctively at the nape of his neck. "*Alpha*."

And then Will does. It's bliss. It's Heaven. It feels unnatural that his body should be equipped to want so much and to have that want supplied. He twists his face to Will's so he can kiss him.

"Oh *God*," Will breathes into his mouth, "I'm inside you right now and I already want to be inside you again."

"Please," Hannibal says. He nips at Will's lower lip, draws back and looks at him. "If it's to be all night," he says, "perhaps the bed, Will?"

"No," Will says. "Everywhere but the bed, I think."

Chapter End Notes

The last two chapters were getting so long that they are now the last three chapters!

Chapter 13

Hannibal has never been the object of a rut before. It is a novel experience. He is academically aware of what it entails, that Will will simply be unable to stop until his body has decided it is done wanting, and his body gives no sign of it. He had expected the pleasure of it to be dulled by the need, the repetition. But it is strangely intoxicating to be the meat on which such single-minded hunger feeds. It is pleasurable and then it is too much and then in the course of being too much it manages to wring more pleasure from him. He wonders if it is revealing, in some way, that the sky is purpling at the edges with morning and Will is still giving it to him with a bruising intensity. Their bodies are not shy of one another, at least.

They have been all over the house; upstairs, when Margot arrived to take Mason away; the kitchen, after she departed. Now they have made the concession of adjourning to the bed. He has to hold on to the window frame above it; each thrust sends the bed into the wall. He's panting. Will thrusts hard and fast and relentless, single-minded with lust. His hips snap forward so hard Hannibal grunts; he's going to have bruises, the shapes of Will's hands marked on his body. All he can do is hold on and take it. He feels used and overstimulated and — good. He has a line of bite marks across his back, his shoulders. Will grips him tight around the waist; he tries not to wince when Will's fingers tighten around a bruise.

"Sorry," Will mutters, into his neck; his voice is a gritty rasp. "I'm hurting you."

"No need to apologize."

"You're going to be wrecked by the time this finishes," Will says.

"Yes," Hannibal says. "I expect so."

"You're doing so well," Will says. Hannibal purrs; he knows Will is praising him deliberately to provoke it. He doesn't mind. In the last few hours even amid the haze of rut they have become still more intimately familiar with each other's responses. To demonstrate this he clenches down and bares his throat; Will's hips stutter forward as if drawn by a magnet.

"You enjoy that," Hannibal says, "making me purr when you're—"

"When I'm fucking you." Will nods. "It feels good," Will noses along his throat. "Knowing you like it." His next thrust knocks the bed forward another inch. Hannibal doesn't stop purring, even as his voice hollows out into a moan.

"You smell frustrated," Hannibal says.

"Aren't you sick of me like this yet?" Will says. Will nuzzles apologetically under his chin; even that gesture has occurred often enough that the skin there is a little raw from his stubble.

"Would you prefer that I was?" Hannibal asks.

Will shakes his head. “No,” he says. “I’m glad you aren’t. But it strains my credulity a little.” He nips at Hannibal’s earlobe, worries at it with his teeth; it feels admonitory, then possessive. “The next time you – do this, be a little less.”

“Less what?”

Will chuckles mirthlessly, buries his nose in Hannibal’s hair; Hannibal can’t help the shiver that slides down his spine when Will scents him. “For lack of a better word, fuckable.”

“For lack of a better word.” Hannibal twists his head to be kissed and Will obliges him. It’s a sloppy kiss, lacking finesse; the angle isn’t quite right; all the same, it’s good.

Will’s arms brace on either side of his shoulders; they both exhale together on his next thrust. Will’s voice in his ear is a low gravelly rumble. “You make it all feel… permissible.”

“Isn’t it?” Hannibal asks.

“To you,” Will says.

“But not to you?” Hannibal asks.

Will sucks another mark under his chin instead of answering. He shoves back against him encouragingly.

“You enjoy marking me,” Hannibal says.

“All my instincts say to make it clear who you belong to.”

“I’m yours,” Hannibal says. “Can you doubt it?”

Will comes with a groan; a wrenching, spent, exhausted noise. They rest there, panting. “It’s never lasted this long.”

Hannibal sighs. “I have no basis for comparison.” They ease down onto the bed together; Will tucks his nose in at the juncture of Hannibal’s neck.

“No,” Will says, his voice curls and rumbles contentedly around the word, “you don’t, do you?”

“You enjoy making me admit it,” Hannibal says. He turns to nip at Will’s ear. Will tries to twist out of range.

“Predictably alpha of me,” Will says. “Laying my claim to —terra incognita.” He gives Hannibal a strangely possessive once-over; Hannibal feels jolted to awareness of how he must look, of the bruises purpling on his body in the shape of Will’s hands, the scratches on his back, how sticky and marked he is. It is every pejorative thing he has associated with his biology, but he feels warmed by it. Chosen.

“Scarcely incognita now,” Hannibal says, “to you.”

“Thoroughly known,” Will says.

Will is draped warmly over him; they rest like this, for a few moments. Will’s chest is covered in sweat; they are starting to stick together.

Will’s knot twitches inside him. “Again?”

Will laughs, rueful. “Again.” He takes a deep, greedy inhale at Hannibal’s neck, then another. Then another. “God,” he says. “You smell like sin. Even more than when this started.” He yawns, muffles it in Hannibal’s shoulder. He presses a kiss there. It feels sweet and furtive. Like Will’s trying to hide it even from himself. He can smell the weariness on him, clogged with lust. Beneath it there is—something else he’s less certain of. Will yawns again.

It feels very soon when Will pulls out and settles on his back; he starts stroking himself but Hannibal interposes his hand and takes over.

“You don’t have to,” Will says.

“I would like to,” Hannibal says.

Will looks at him; his eyes are still blown black with desire but his mouth curves knowingly up at the edges. “You smell possessive,” he says.

“What does that smell like?”

“Like a cookfire,” Will says. “Like… indoors smells in winter.” His grin widens. “Like a house made of gingerbread.”

“A trap?”

“Something out of a fairy tale,” Will says. His voice stretches over the words in a yawn. “Everything I shouldn’t want.”

“Turkish delight.”

Will shakes his head. “Turkish delight is a disappointment.” He yawns, shuts his eyes. It has been a full night. He’s beautiful, Hannibal thinks. His body is even more familiar now. Like this, in the dim light, he is like a lewd Endymion; a perfect, slumbering sculpture, with one priapic detail. The thought amuses him; Will must smell the amusement; he looks up at him, smiles back.

Hannibal watches his hand at work on Will’s cock, still defiantly hard, even after the night that they have passed; curious to feel so proprietary, so intimately familiar with something that does not belong to him. Curious, yet not curious, that Will is letting him make himself so free of his body. The rut has been a high-wire act in which Will’s body has flung itself at him and simply trusted him to catch it and he has not faltered. Heat will be like this, he thinks. Will blinks up at him, blurry but *fond;* Will's fingers trace along the muscles of his arm as Hannibal's hand tugs. “All right, omega,” Will says, stretching his arms over his head, “climb on.”

Hannibal does. Will makes a wounded, desperate-sounding noise as he slides back in, halfway between a groan and a sigh. “God,” he says. “Fuck.”

“Better?” Hannibal asks; a new feeling, to be smug in this particular way, for this particular reason; he tries not to sound too smug.

“You know it,” Will says. Hannibal reaches down and traces a finger around the ridge of his ear; Will looks up at him with a kind of incredulous, frustrated delight. “I still only feel *right* when I’m inside you.”

Hannibal looks down at him. It is hard not to feel proprietary in this position, with the familiar expanse of Will’s body bared beneath him. He slides his hands up Will’s arms, pins his wrists above his head. Will looks up at him. Will’s mouth twists.

“Look at you,” Will says. He can smell in Will’s scent what he looks like, an omega who has been at the disposal of an alpha in rut, in all the ways he had pictured and a few he hadn’t. He feels strangely bare, a little dizzy. He had surmised that the indignity would be entirely on the side of the alpha, but it isn’t, not entirely; biology has simply determined what Will is willing to demand, it has not dictated what he has been willing to permit. He feels exposed.

Hannibal rolls his hips and Will makes a startled noise of pleasure. He does it again. It’s rougher than he means to be but Will is impossibly encouraging, thrusting up to meet him, eyes sliding over his whole body like a touch, memorizing every mark. “What do you see?” he asks.

Will shuts his eyes. “My omega,” he says. It’s almost a whisper. When Will’s eyes open there’s finally a hint of blue in them, peeling the darkness back at the edges, like the light leaking into the sky outside the window. “Here,” Will says, abruptly. “Wait.” Will sits up, tilts him back against the pillows, pulls out. He clambers between his legs, catches the backs of Hannibal’s thighs with his hands and holds them apart so he can scent him, where the slick is leaking onto the sheets. Then he bends his head to taste. He will never get enough of seeing Will’s face when he does this; how his eyes fall shut in exquisite ecstasy as he licks, nips, chases the flavor with his tongue.

“*Alpha*,” he breathes.

“*Hannibal*,” Will gasps; Hannibal feels the word breathed into his body. It sounds hungry and reverent at the same time. “Fuck.”

It’s so good. It’s horrible. This feels stolen. Will settles in with a contented, muffled hum; Hannibal pulls his hair encouragingly to get his tongue just where he wants it. Rut doesn’t excuse this, he wants to point out; this is just Will deliberately and meticulously wringing his pleasure out of him, not to satisfy himself, except in the primal alpha sense that bringing his omega satisfaction is a source of pride; it feels strangely indulgent that Will is exhausted and bleary-eyed and still doggedly eager to please him with his mouth. His own eyes fall shut; he lies there and lets himself surrender to it, doesn’t fight the tired, needy sounds his body wants to make. He feels loose and overstimulated and— as though he is dissolving. Will gets a face full of slick for his trouble, makes a thirsty, satisfied noise. Hannibal feels pricklingly sensitive everywhere they touch; he can feel the minutest scrapes of Will’s stubble against his

inner thighs. It's a detail of intimacy that he's strangely attached to. It feels particular to Will. To his alpha. He allows himself to luxuriate in the thought. It feels right. He can shut his eyes and drift off on the tide of pleasure, safe in their commingled scents and the soothing scrape of Will's chin against an area of his anatomy that has been particularly well-used. Mine, he thinks. He must make a sound.

"All right?" Will asks.

"Perfectly," Hannibal says.

"You've been so good," Will says. "I wanted to—start making it up to you."

"You can," Hannibal says. "During my heat." He is starting to burst with hope; he can't hold back from reveling in it, from thinking, he'll be so good when I'm in heat, he's perfect, my alpha. This is a foretaste of the feast to come.

Will makes a pleased, indulgent-sounding noise; it vibrates through his whole body. He feels like his body is a map pricked out everywhere with tiny lights.

He can tell his own scent is stronger now; the sheets are starting to be drenched with his slick. He opens his eyes.

"God," Will says, pulling back; his voice sounds ruined. "*Hannibal*." Will's eyes on him feel worse than a touch; more of the blue is creeping back into them; he can smell the haze of rut clearing, and now Will is looking at the mess they have made of him together as though Will is committing him to memory, engraving the shape of him like this somewhere deep in his mind. Wherever they go, whatever becomes of them, this will always be something that Will has seen. A sight Will has cared for enough to memorize. Hannibal does not ordinarily feel vulnerable when naked; he feels *bare* now, like Will has pried open his shell.

Will's finger traces up the inside of his leg and catches the slick; he reaches up and lifts it expectantly to Hannibal's lips and Hannibal licks it. Their eyes don't leave each other. "It always feels like blasphemy," Will says. "That it's *you*." Hannibal sucks attentively at his finger, memorizing the insistent weight of it against his lips, the little uncontrolled *Ah* of breath that escapes Will's lips. "Your slick. *Your* mouth."

Hannibal pulls him on top of him. "It feels unholy to you, what we are together," he says; his voice is a low breathy hum; it sounds alien; he feels as if electricity is starting to buzz beneath his skin.

"There's nothing holy about this," Will says. He tugs Hannibal's chin up so he can kiss him. The kiss is obscene, wet and thirsty; it feels terrifying to be seen so openly *wanting;* he does not have Will's excuse but he is right there with him, matching him groan for groan. Will's hand slides down his shoulder to press over his heart. Will's eyes fall shut. Hannibal watches him; there is a strange amber heaviness to Will's motions, as though now he is trying to lock each moment away from time. Will's scent is all over the place. It's terrifying. He can feel the admission, the possessiveness, the thrill of *my omega* every time Will touches him, every time Will scents him, tastes him, looks at him. It is heady. It would be intoxicating, if it were not for the other, more frustrated, aroma that is creeping in. Will's scent is so sharp it cuts;

Will is cut on it; every time they kiss he is grabbing it by the blade. There is pain in it. It is excruciating but Hannibal thinks it would be more excruciating not to.

“I am the alpha and the omega, the first and the last,” Hannibal says. “In scripture this primitive duality is incorporated even into the image of God. What we are together is divine. Why should we shrink from it? I don’t hide from God.”

“Even the devil can quote scripture to his purpose,” Will says. Will’s eyes flicker open; Will catches him looking. “You’re thinking,” Will says. “I can smell it.”

“Barely,” Hannibal says. He bares his throat. Will licks it. A gush of slick takes both of them a little by surprise. It feels dangerous again, having his mouth there, the right place. He feels the touch rush through him, like a magnet pulling iron filings up to the surface of his skin, like the poles of his body are realigning. For just a moment, it feels possible.

Instead Will kisses him, sweet and lingering, starts fucking him in earnest. The sweetness feels almost impermissible. Will fucks him slow and thorough, pressing him deep into the sheets, making the bed inch along the floor. It hardly feels like rut; it feels like he’s trying to cram a lifetime of lovemaking into a single night. Hannibal holds on to his back, buries his nose in his throat. Will has never smelled so good.

“I’m close,” Will says. “Come with me?”

“Alpha,” he gasps; he feels clawed open with need; it’s all suddenly too much and not enough; he’s not sure quite why.

“Please,” Will says. “I think this is the last of it.” Hannibal can see the rim of blue chasing the black from his eyes, like a planet sliding into view behind the curve of its moon. He can smell something at the back of Will’s scent that he can’t quite put his finger on; he wants to halt time and freeze them just here, so he can put his finger on it.

Will’s fingers slide around his cock; he can’t freeze them; time has them; they plunge back into the world together, Will’s knot pulsing within him as Will’s fingers work at him.

The orgasm, when it hits, is excruciating; he feels racked with it, like an exorcism, like something is leaving his body. He looks at Will, panting through his own climax, eyes shut, lashes fluttering against his cheeks. He feels so close and still too far, unutterably far. When Will’s eyes open they’re clear again.

“You all right?” Will asks.

Hannibal swallows around a strange vertiginous wash of sensation. He still *wants*. He feels acutely sensitive everywhere, like the fire has spread to him and not been extinguished. He takes a deep breath, then another. Will’s scent is inflaming and reassuring at once. He is all right. His alpha is here.

“Yes,” he says. “Are you?”

Will exhales sharply, pulls a face. “I have no idea.”

He lies there in Will's arms, bruised and sticky and used. He feels outside himself even as the haze of *want* clears, as Will comes back to himself; he still feels strangely electric everywhere, like he has touched a wire and not been grounded yet. Slick keeps beading on his thighs, trickling steadily down them. And Will smells – magnificent. Blood and desire, thick and hot. Alpha, he thinks. Even now that he smells the icy prickling of recrimination sneaking in, Will still smells perfect. The hot tide of rut has receded and all he smells is *my alpha*.

Will gets up, tugs on his boxers, fetches a damp washcloth, starts tending to him. It feels cool and soothing on the bruises; so do Will's hands on him. He lets himself be tended to; it is intimacy of another order, in the squinting light of dawn, Will bleary-eyed and yawning but still determined to take care of him. He wonders if it's instinct or something else. It is soothing to be touched by him but his touch is still maddening.

His mind feels fogged. Will helps him into clothes; the gentleness is strangely unbearable.

Hannibal tries to think what to say to him. The silence between them feels precarious, ice he is unsure can bear his weight. His body feels warm and secure and… itchy. His brain feels foggy. He feels as if the wrong word will send them plunging. But he must find the right word. Now that the insistence of their bodies has receded all they have for each other are words, and words have minds of their own.

"It's all right," Will says, suddenly. Will strokes a hand through his hair.

"Is it?" Hannibal asks. He leans into the touch.

"You win," Will says.

"What do I win?"

"Everything," Will says. "You planned everything so neatly. Getting yourself taken. The blood in the office. Abigail was a sweet touch. This rut was –" Will exhales, wearily —"frankly excessive; you scarcely had to prove to me that I want you; I've barely had a minute's rational thought since I first smelled you. I surrender."

"I am not asking for your surrender," Hannibal says. This sensation feels like falling, like plummeting. He clutches at Will, almost without thinking.

"You can be sure of me now," Will says. "I'm caught. Hook, line, and sinker. They know, Hannibal. This dinner with Jack, it's a trap. He has witnesses. Bedelia. Freddie Lounds. All of this was supposed to be a trap. They'll catch you if you stay. Take Abigail and go. As soon as you can."

Hannibal can scarcely breathe. He has to venture onto the ice; he doesn't know what words to use. He hears a great roaring sound in his ears, like a cataract. Like water rushing over stone. "And what will you do?"

"Here in the trap?" Will shrugs. "Gnaw off my own leg." He laughs, bitterly. "I've given up on justice, Hannibal. On vengeance. You've played this all perfectly. A risky game, but – an

efficient one. Contrapasso, for my sins. I even forgive you. But I don't want to play anymore. I want you to leave before you get caught too."

"Come with me?" Hannibal says.

"I can't," Will says. "I couldn't."

"Why not?"

Hannibal waits. Breathes in, breathes out. He feels a ragged panic starting to claw its way up his stomach and into his throat.

"I couldn't be like this," Will says, "Not all the time. Not the way you want. To you, those men at the farm were -- just a wall of flesh that you constructed. To see if I would cut through the wall to reach you. And God knows I was glad enough to do it. But -- I don't have your appetite, Hannibal."

Hannibal's mouth opens and shuts around a whole cornucopia of words. You liked it, he thinks of saying. I wanted you to see how splendid you were. "You did only what you felt you needed to," he says, but it's a false step; Will's scent bristles.

"You know that's not true," he says.

"No," Hannibal says. "It's not true."

"I let myself do exactly what you wanted."

"Was it only I who wanted it?"

"I told you," Will says, "it's all begun to blur. Just like you planned."

Hannibal feels miserably torn between conflicting impulses; he wants to curl in on himself in the face of these lacerating words, and he wants to take comfort in his alpha. It is strange to be taking comfort from the hand that wields the rod. He clutches Will, buries his nose in his neck. Takes a shaky inhale of his scent. Will smells miserable; the indulgence has vanished and it is like a stab of ice, like the garden is frozen. Will's arm comes up around him.

"I didn't plan it," Hannibal says.

Will looks at him. "I even forgive you for lying."

"In Peer Gynt," Hannibal says, "Peer is offered a kingdom in exchange for surrendering his ability to discern truth from falsehood, beauty from grotesquerie. Peer is content to lie so long as he will still know that he is lying."

"You think that is what I'm afraid of," Will says. "Not knowing."

"Isn't it?" Hannibal says.

"I know myself," Will says. "I'm not you, Hannibal. I don't want the things you want."

“We established,” Hannibal says, “that I can smell when you are lying.”

“I want you all the time,” Will says, quietly. “Does that smell true?”

“Don’t,” Hannibal says.

“I don’t think it’s possible for me to stop wanting you,” Will says. “I forget what it’s like to want something that isn’t you.”

“You are tormenting us both deliberately.”

“We deserve it,” Will says. “And I’m not tormenting you. This is all proof of your victory.”

“You send me away,” Hannibal says, “and you call it my victory. You lock me out and call it freedom.”

“Isn't it?” Will says.

Hannibal twists to look at him. Then moves to kiss him. It’s a frantic, thirsty, desperate kiss; fervent like a prayer. Will looks scalded when he pulls back. “Please,” Hannibal says; he is begging; he should be ashamed; he feels like a loose tooth hanging by a thread. He feels rage at his own impotence. “Please, alpha.”

“Don’t,” Will says. “You want me to believe *that* when I know you orchestrated all of this.”

“All of this was a clutch for balance,” Hannibal says. “I have not known a moment’s balance since I met you. Will.”

“I’m giving it back,” Will says. “Take it."

“I don’t want it,” Hannibal says. “I don’t want it back.”

“You know how I feel about you," Will says. "You've made sure of me."

"Do I?" Hannibal says.

“You have my heart, Hannibal. You can get by without my soul.”

Hannibal wants to say, you are my soul, I already don’t know which parts of me are me and which are you; I wouldn’t be able to reassemble anything resembling myself without your help. If you take your soul then mine is taken with it. The words all stick in his mouth. They’re only words. His head buzzes. He feels sick. This was too clever by half, he thinks, and you’ve lost him, he’s yours but you’ve lost him.

“I don’t want anyone to hurt you,” Will says. “Not anymore.”

"Please," Hannibal says. He feels like his heart has been seized from his rib cage. Seized between teeth. Now it is being bitten. Now it is being chewed, bite by bite. “Will."

Will twists away from him. “Don’t,” he says. “I'm giving you the only things I can give you," he says. "Your life. Your freedom. Your victory."

"Not yourself."

"You already have me," Will says. "That's why I want you to run."

"If you don't trust me," Hannibal says, "why not give me to Jack?"

Will smiles, a miserable small triumphant smile. "You know why. Because you’re my omega,” Will says. “Because I—”

“Don’t,” Hannibal says. It’s a growl. “Don’t you dare say it.”

*

He isn’t sure how he gets home.

He knows what it is when he gets there. The whole house makes him feel sick. There is too much of Will everywhere. His whole skin feels wrong. He feels like sand has been rubbed inside his skin. He is too conscious of exactly what he needs. He feels – ravenous and sick and dizzy and helpless. Everything is ruined. His alpha has rejected him.

“Hannibal?” Abigail says. “You don’t look so good.”

He answers with an effort. He is not sure what he answers. He feels reckless. He wants to find everything Will has ever touched and burn it. He wants to find everything Will has ever touched and *nest* in it. It wouldn’t have been unbearable with him. It’s unbearable without him. He feels incomplete, like his skin is missing. He must find armor. All his armor is gone and he must arm himself somehow. He has a thousand thoughts at once and they are all drenched in blood. It feels like his mind is on fire.

He tears the sheets off the bed first. He can’t help sniffing them. The scent is still soothing after everything. He can’t help burying his face in them. His face is wet.

He can feel a prickling under his skin. An itch, next to his pulse, throbbing in his neck. He needs. He craves. He aches. God is unsurpassed in wanton malice, and matchless in his irony.

Chapter 14

Hannibal knows what this is.

He staggers into the bathroom and finds the bottle of suppressants. If he takes enough of them right now, he can forestall this torment. Or if that is insufficient, he can go to his office, inject himself with something more potent, convince his body to make it stop. Before he loses himself entirely.

Will wants him to run. Will is not coming. The thought makes something mortifyingly like a whimper slip out of his lips. Will wants him to leave.

Will wants him to protect himself. The FBI knows. Jack will be coming and soon he will be in no state for meeting Jack. He should seize his life in his fists and run. Will thinks that what he wants is freedom. Will expects him to put himself out of this particular misery.

There was a time when that was what he wanted. For his mind to be his own again. It feels so remote he can scarcely remember it. Now he thinks, *I don't want it. I want him.*

This is reckless, his mind chides. *I know*, he thinks. *I want him*. He wants you to have your life. *I know*, he thinks. *I want him.*

His pulse is like the ticking of a clock, each throb pulls him closer to the point of no return. Soon it will be too late to stop it. Soon his body will betray him and his mind will be submerged in the hot darkness of want and he will scarcely know himself, will scarcely know anything save that he *burns*. And that will be how Jack finds him.

Is it that you hope he will come? No, he thinks. But whether he comes or not, he will know that I meant it. In such moments he finds himself turning again to Dante. *Of all my life is left no sign Except one thought, and that, because 'tis thine, leaves not the body but abideth there.* His body's sole thought is: *his.* He will not uproot that thought.

He pours the bottle down the sink. He will start preparing dinner while he waits for it to take him. He starts chopping vegetables, watching for the moment when his hands will start to shake.

*

Will feels dazed. The whole house still smells like Hannibal. Like the scent of them together. He can't escape it anywhere. He goes to stand on the porch and inhale the morning air to clear his head, but Hannibal has gotten mixed up with the scent of morning somehow, of dew on the grass and the sun peeling it off. The morning without him smells incomplete; a rendition on a penny whistle of a tune intended for a whole brass section, and the penny whistle keeps getting the tune wrong.

He showers. It's not better, sloughing the scent of Hannibal off his skin. He feels bereft. His first thought is, oddly, to regret that he's not as marked as he could be. Hannibal is thoroughly marked now; bruises and bites, patches of skin scraped intimately raw (he shouldn't be thinking about this; he shouldn't have mapped Hannibal's body like that only to torment himself with it.)

He feels coldly furious at nothing in particular. At least you didn't wait until his heat, he thinks, and then something wretched and animal claws its way up his throat and perches under his chin, a scream of frustration waiting to be let out. Don't think about his heat, he thinks; you'll drive yourself mad. Wherever he goes, he'll spend it without you. You can't think about it.

If he spends it at all, he thinks. If he lets himself have one.

He thinks of Hannibal with his defenses stripped from him; reduced to the condition of all omegas, a whining, begging mess. Not reduced, he thinks; he would be beautiful like that. It feels illicit to picture; something hot and deadly snakes through the pit of his stomach. Desperate for his alpha. For you. And you won't be there, he thinks. Some alpha you are.

Then the thought, small but echoing, you've decided you're his alpha, then.

He sighs, tugs the pillow under his nose, inhales the miserable sweetness of their commingled scents. Whose else would I ever be, he thinks. What I would be to him I couldn't be to anyone else.

Not that it matters. He's too smart to have one, now.

He'll be safe, but he won't be yours. Just how you wanted. He'll be free and if you ever see him again he'll smell unfamiliar and neutral, not like – everything you don't let yourself want.

The scream claws raggedly at the base of his throat.

*

He gives up trying and failing to sleep after a few fitful, miserable hours. Takes another shower. Feeds the dogs. Lets them out for a run. Winston refuses to go very far; he keeps underfoot; he seems concerned.

He looks at his phone. Two missed calls from Jack. He gets in the car to drive to Quantico.

*

Kade Purnell advances on Jack, brandishing a manila folder.

"Jack," Kade says, "he killed Randall Tier."

"In self defense."

"Mutilated his body, put it on display. According to Mr. Ingram—""

“Clark Ingram is a psychopath.”

“Yeah, well, he says Will pulled a gun on him, and then *mounted* Hannibal Lecter right there.”

“He what.”

“Is he in control or is he out of control, Jack? I would like to know which.”

“You believe Clark Ingram?”

“He was in a horse,” Kade says. “We know that much is true, and that sounds even crazier. Why would he lie?”

“Why would Will lie?”

“If you don’t know the answer to that--” Kade says. “This is insane, Jack. This is out of control. This ends now.”

“Will is still our best chance of catching Hannibal Lecter.”

Kade makes an exasperated noise. “I can’t hear this. Jack. You're distracted. I understand that your wife is very ill. Pending an inquiry, you are being placed on compassionate leave.”

*

Will is halfway to the building from his car when he sees Jack approaching across the parking lot with the contents of his desk in a box.

“Jack?” he says.

“We’re going now,” Jack says.

“Now?” Will asks. “He won’t be expecting us now.”

“Kade Purnell is putting me on forced compassionate leave,” Jack says, “and bringing you up on charges for the murder of Randall Tier. So if you’re with me, we’re going now. Are you with me, Will?”

Will adjusts his glasses, turns back towards his car. “No time like the present.”

*

Will’s in his car, picking up the phone before he can consciously think about it. It rings once. Twice.

“Hannibal?” he says.

He hears Hannibal's jagged inhale on the other end. *No,* he thinks. *Not now. It can't be now*. But at the same time, with a plummeting, leaden certainty, he knows. "Alpha," Hannibal says. In those two syllables Will hears everything.

"Oh God," Will says. "You're in heat."

*

Strange to have made a decision without having consciously made a decision. To simply catch his own eyes in the rear-view mirror and see a man who has made up his mind. To see something almost giddy in the look. My omega, he thinks. Hannibal fucking Lecter.

*

Hannibal is snarled in a drenched tangle of sheets. He was cutting vegetables at the moment when remaining upright became unbearable; he is still clutching the knife. He is a seething mass of *want*. At first when he noticed what was happening to him he tried to observe it dispassionately, map it into poetry. *I found myself in the midst of a dark wood*. But the Dante is thin comfort. He thought the parallels between the Inferno and the poet's experience of heat must have been deliberate; he had such thoughts when he was still capable of observing himself from without. He is not sure when he went from attempting to catalogue the sensations to simply enduring them. He is encased in flame, he is encased in ice, he is upside down, he can smell tantalizing relief that never comes; he is buffeted by winds; he is drenched and miserable; he is neither dead nor alive, seized with cold terror. There is no way out but through. Every movement sends him deeper in. And his alpha is not here. His alpha is not coming. His thoughts all take the unfamiliar form of prayers, supplications for unlistening ears. He has the sensation that all of them are trapped in the room with him, that they are what makes it so unbearably hot. The thoughts are infuriatingly simple; simple as graffiti from the ruins of Pompeii, as inscriptions from centuries before that. *Where is my alpha. Hurry, send me my alpha. O I burn.*

But it is not only his body. When he was still in a state to think of metaphors he thought, this is a fit metaphor for what he's done to you. You need, you desperately need, and there is no longer anything within yourself that can sate the need. You let yourself become his; whatever becomes of you, there will always be a piece of your soul missing from your body. At least if he'd claimed you you'd have a piece of him.

The heat is miles worse than his last one. Now his body is intimately familiar with the sensations it is being denied. He feels hollowed out into a mold; he could cast a new Will from the shape of his yearning, the precision of the ache.

*

Will feels frenzied with nervous energy. He clutches his fingers in his coat. He was trying to beat Jack there but Jack's waiting on the sidewalk in front of the house; he wonders how he must look, if his agitation shows on his face.

"You look like hell," Jack says.

"I feel like hell," Will says.

"Lucky you didn't see what he did at Muskrat Farm," Jack says.

"Oh?" Will says.

"Enough to turn your stomach," Jack says. "Never seen that amount of blood. And – we can't even tell how many bodies. The pigs got to them."

"They're opportunistic omnivores," Will says. "Like us."

"Not like most of us," says Jack. "That's not human, Will. That's Hannibal."

"He's human, Jack," Will says. "That's the most terrifying thing about him."

Jack rings the doorbell. There's no answer; Will never expected one. He tries the door and it opens. At first Will doesn't know if the scent that slides into his nostrils the moment he cracks the door is real or his imagination.

Will glances at Jack, to see if he can smell it; it feels impossible that he can't smell it. It's shouting in his nostrils. Desire and rage and confusion and something terrifyingly like hope. *Yours*, the scent says. It's desperately revealing, like seeing his name caressed in Hannibal's looping cursive, his form traced by Hannibal's pencil. This is how Hannibal writes *Will* with his body, with his scent; it feels almost too intimate, impossible that this is being broadcast to all the alphas and omegas in range. There's no finesse, no control; Hannibal's scent is simply screaming his name, over and over, in every language they have shared between them. This is a negative exactly the shape of himself; in the brutal strokes of desire Hannibal has drawn him, in every curl and twist of scent, it's so precisely *him* that Hannibal wants that he feels dizzy. Him a thousand ways; licking industriously between Hannibal's legs; drenched in blood and steaming with violence; unpicking a crime scene; reading over Hannibal's shoulder; making a joke only Hannibal catches; even in the throes of rut. It's everything Hannibal has ever thought about him, all flooding his nostrils at once. He glances over at Jack again. Jack doesn't smell anything. But if it's as bad as it smells then they won't have much time before Jack knows. The house will have *heat* stamped all over it.

Jack walks in first. Hannibal is not in the kitchen; he was, Will smells, he had to give it up. Jack starts to make a sweep of the first floor, gun drawn. Will heads straight for the stairs. The scent points only one way. If it were thinner it would be like a golden thread tugging him upwards; it is anything but thin, thick and heavy, like being borne up on a flood tide.

*

Hannibal smells Will before he sees him.

His body responds before his mind can; his mind is sluggish; his body is desperate. His thighs are beading with slick. He feels like clawing his way out of his skin. The scent is a balm and a torment at the same time.

Will has never smelled so absolutely right, so absolutely necessary. It is not that Will smells merely good; Will smells *perfect*. It is as though he is locked in a suffocating room, and can only breathe fresh air when Will's scent is in his nostrils.

He blinks unsteadily out from his makeshift nest of sheets.

"Jack's here," Will says; his voice is strangely gentle. Hannibal feels a sudden wash of impotent rage; his fingers tighten on the handle of his knife. "Hannibal," Will says, and Hannibal can't help but look at him. He is a creature of instinct now, rage and instinct. He hears footsteps on the stairs. His alpha has betrayed him. His alpha is here smelling like everything he wants in the world, necessary and sweet as water, but Jack is here and his alpha is with Jack.

Hannibal lurches out of the ball of sheets, knife at the ready. He will make Will feel what he has done. He will take a piece of him, however he can. He growls feebly.

"Hannibal," Will says, "*no*."

His fingers snap open; the knife clatters harmlessly to the floor. They stare at each other. *Please*, he thinks. *I need you. Don't leave me like this.* Will smells terrified, but also — certain in a way he hasn't smelled before.

Will takes a step closer. Then another step.

Behind him Jack appears in the doorway and freezes in his tracks.

"You didn't tell me he was in heat," Jack says.

Then Will lunges for the knife. Hannibal can smell what is happening almost before he sees it, the knowledge feels like one of those signals sent from his brain to his arm before his arm begins to move, somewhere within himself that is deeper than conscious thought. He catches Will's eyes as Will moves, as Will seizes the knife, as Will whirls and catches Jack with the blade. Jack's hand comes up to parry it, it sticks in the flesh of his hand. Hannibal is trying to move to help, through the haze of heat, through the fog and chaos of his brain. He catches Jack by the arm and Jack retaliates; Jack is strong; Jack is not clouded; Jack hurls him into the bedroom mirror and it shatters. The shards cascade tinklingly onto the floor beneath him.

He is dazed; he knows he is bleeding. He can smell Will's concern, it feels like a physical thing wrapped around him; it smells unthinkably good. It is distracting. Jack aims a punch at him and it lands. His ears ring.

He grabs for Jack's arm but Jack gets him in a headlock. Jack squeezes. He hears a growl and then Will strikes. One moment Jack's arm is tightening around his neck, whitening the edges

of his vision, the next Jack is staggering back, hand pressed to a shard of broken mirror in his neck. Jack retreats down the stairs.

Will doesn't immediately follow. Will is kneeling over him, eyes wide. Hannibal gasps air back into his lungs. He feels momentarily, crazedly, like they are both doing the same thing; Will drinking him in with his eyes, his lungs inflating with oxygen. Like they have both been starved of something necessary.

"Hannibal," Will says, gently, impossibly gently; even under the rush and tumult of heat he can smell Will now, the walls of the garden crumbling.

Their eyes lock and then Will is leaning in — *he's going to*, Hannibal thinks, with a sudden lurch of hope; he bares his throat — and then Will's mouth is on his neck, Will is biting down. Hard. The right place. For keeps.

"There," Will says, shakily. His mouth is red. My blood, Hannibal thinks. My alpha. Will makes a soft, desperate sound, like he has just lost a long battle, like he has won a great victory.

Hannibal feels hollowed out. They keep looking at each other. He feels *naked*. He feels flayed open, like everything he's ever felt is written in his eyes, like Will has just found the Rosetta Stone to unfold all his hidden meanings. He can feel Will looking back. Will is looking at him like he's unspeakably precious. Like he sees him, all the way around him. He feels too full to breathe. Will smells impossible. He is in the garden; they are in the garden together; he will not be expelled from this place.

"Alpha," he says. His fingers rise to touch the bite mark, almost without his conscious intent. The shape of Will's mouth on him. His alpha's mouth. Will is his alpha. And he doesn't smell regret. Will smells whole and perfect and *his*. He has to kiss him. He feels a tug of answering *need* from somewhere both within and outside himself; when their mouths come together it feels like a circuit closing. He can see the same awareness of – not being alone dawning in Will's eyes. Then he has to kiss him again. He never wants to stop kissing him. Will tastes like blood, like home.

Hannibal sags against him. He feels as though he is spilling, too full to be contained in himself only; he feels as though it is into Will that he is spilling. "Will," he says. It sounds like *alpha*; he can feel what hearing it does to Will.

"You're mine," Will says. He cups the side of Hannibal's face. His hand feels blessedly cool. Hannibal whimpers. He rubs his face against Will's hand and Will makes a soft encouraging sound. "And now I'm yours, God help me."

Their eyes catch. He wishes he were still enough himself to observe himself from without; he must be a pitiful spectacle, but all he can glimpse of himself is in Will's eyes, and what he sees there is terrifyingly radiant. "Please," Hannibal says; he can smell something sweet and sharp, like a hand reaching for his, "touch me."

"We can't spend your heat here," Will says.

“No,” Hannibal agrees. Will nuzzles at his neck. Hannibal feels a sudden dizzying wash of possessiveness, *my omega, he’s actually mine,* outside him yet accessible to him; it thrills through him, and then it’s so good it’s agony. He whines.

“How bad is it?” Will asks.

“Dantean,” Hannibal says. He buries his face in Will’s neck, takes a deep inhale. It feels wrong that their bodies are separate. “I need you.” It’s better and worse at once, having Will here, so near, his nostrils full of his scent, so familiar and so suggestive. His mouth waters. He knows Will can smell how drenched he is. “Please,” he says. It’s pathetic and barely deliberate; Will kisses his neck, desperate, possessive. “Knot me.”

“We can’t,” Will says. Will kisses him on the face, on the ear, on the neck; they are clutching desperately at each other. “Not here. They’ll find us.” He can feel the fragile thread of Will’s restraint about to snap. “Hannibal,” Will says, beseeching, “we really, really--” their mouths come together again, like it’s more necessary than air; he catches another protest on his tongue; all his senses are wonderfully, gratifyingly full of *alpha;* he licks Will’s perspiring neck and catches the sweet salt taste of *alpha* on his tongue. Not just any alpha; his alpha in particular. Will’s scent is subtly different, now, marked with his stamp. Even as he mutters another protest against his lips, Will’s hand has slid into his shirt, is pressing a firm, warm caress along his chest, like Will can’t bear not to be touching him either, and when Hannibal’s shaking fingers insinuate themselves into his waistband and wrap around his cock he exhales sharply but permits the touch. “Hannibal,” Will says, but he’s pushing Hannibal back onto the bed, undoing his belt, clambering between Hannibal’s knees. “Fuck, we shouldn’t.”

As Will presses his knees open and tears their pants down their eyes catch, hold; they exchange a wondering, bemused look through the heat and desperation that is coaxing their bodies together. *You*, their eyes say, *what a miracle that it’s you.* It’s reckless, he knows it’s reckless, even with his mind a throbbing haze of *want,* but Will is there, his alpha, and he has never *needed* like this.

Will pushes him onto his back on the bed, shoves inside him with a low relieved-sounding growl. He exhales. The fog lifts for a moment. He bares his throat and Will nips contentedly at it, the bite mark throbs; everything feels *right*. He can feel Will feeling it.

“Omega,” Will says, all lust and wonder. Hannibal clutches at his back, whimpers under the sheer overwhelming weight of sensation. It is too great an effort to form words. There is a voyeuristic delight in feeling something of what this is doing to Will, in getting quick unabashed glimpses of his pleasure, his want; there is a vulnerability in being seen wanting, in knowing Will can feel exactly what he does to him. “Hannibal,” Will breathes, “fuck, I had no idea.”

You had some idea, Hannibal thinks; he feels like the one who had no idea. It’s everything and nothing like Will’s rut; Will touches him with care, purposefully, even when he’s rough he’s careful. Will wraps his fingers around him and tugs; he feels like an instrument Will has played before without being able to hear the sound he was making. Now Will hears it.

He wants to sob with relief. Will starts nuzzling at the bitemark and then licking it; it shivers through his whole body.

The speed with which Will is trying to coax his pleasure out of him demands an almost brutal efficiency— Will is attentive to the most minute variations in sensation, he probes almost clinically for what is pushing Hannibal closer to the edge and what is tugging him back from it; it would be shockingly invasive if it weren't so sweet and desperate. After this is over he will have time to feel properly chastened and startled that he let Will see so much of him at once; now he simply gives way to the sensation, whimpers with overstimulated pleasure as Will's fingers wrap around his throat, thumb stroking over the bite mark. He comes in a rush into Will's other hand, all over his capable fingers; he will have time later to feel alarmed that Will has glimpsed what he thinks about his fingers.

"Will," he gasps. There is a measure of relief in coming, surrounded like this by Will's scent, feeling Will inside him. Will looks at him with wonder and terror.

"This wasn't smart," Will says. Hannibal can feel his knot swelling. It's *wonderful.* It's never felt like this. It's like he can breathe again.

"No," Hannibal says, "*alpha*." He pulls Will's hand to his lips, kisses the fingers. It feels too much for speech. The feeling as they stare at each other is almost shock. Will makes a wrenched, startled noise when he comes. Hannibal clutches at him. They lie there together listening to the violent drumming of their hearts. It's raining, Hannibal realizes; he can hear it pounding on the roof.

"Couldn't refuse my omega," Will says, with something almost like a laugh; he can feel the hot spike of amusement, wonder, *Hannibal Lecter is my omega*, that follows it.

He is still messy with slick but his hands feel steadier. The steady throb of want is dulled, slightly; they have purchased time.

"I'll do better than that, I promise," Will says, into his neck; he kisses him on the bitemark. "I'm going to take such good care of you. But we can't stay here."

"No," Hannibal says, "but there is somewhere we can go."

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hannibal is only fitfully aware of the car ride to the cliff house; he will think, later, with mortification, of how he curled up in the back seat with his face buried in Will's shirtfront; Will had the presence of mind to put a blanket over them. Abigail drove. He caught her eyes just once in the rear-view mirror; she looked, as usual, as though she were thinking a great many things and her brain were whirring on the subject of whether to utter any of them.

He tries not to think of the soft, needy noises he made; he does remember the pink flush that rose all the way to the tips of Will's ears, the protective way Will curled around him, as if he could corral all the noises for himself.

"You're not actually my dad, you know," Abigail said, not turning her head.

"Still," Will said. "This deserves—privacy."

"So," she said, eyes on the bitemark in the mirror. "He got you."

"Yes," Will said. He traced the bitemark with his thumb. It was already becoming a habit. "It felt more honest to admit it."

"Can you feel what he's thinking?"

Hannibal pressed his nose into Will's neck, took a faint satisfied inhale. "He's not thinking very much, at present," Will said, rueful.

They made it to the cliff house.

*

Hannibal had not known how good a heat could feel. He knows the vulnerability of it, the need, the feverish desperate emptiness; he had not known the ecstatic satisfaction of being knotted when his whole body is crying out for nothing else. The pleasure is so sharp that it feels like pain, like a mistake; the first time he comes on Will's knot he thinks he is going to escape himself altogether; he feels like a moth bursting from its cocoon. For a moment he has the sensation of being Will staring at himself, at the open oval of his own kiss-stung mouth, he is luminous like a DaVinci angel; he blinks and the sensation passes, he is staring at Will's wide eyes and parted lips, at the expression of lust and reverence in his blue eyes.

"Fuck," Will says, "we have to do that again."

"I am in heat," Hannibal says; his voice sounds wrecked, "we will have many more opportunities." He pulls Will down into his arms and they lie there, listening to the living clockwork of their hearts.

“I didn’t know it could feel like that,” Will says.

“No,” Hannibal says, “nor did I.” He tilts his head so Will can nuzzle at the bond mark. “There is no sauce like hunger.”

Will laughs into his neck. “Christ,” he says. “You feel so good.” Hannibal kisses him on the shoulder. “But it was always good with you."

“Plato treated this subject in the Symposium,” Hannibal says; he is astounded that his mouth is forming words; he still feels as if he is somewhere not quite back inside his body, somewhere he can touch Will closer than skin. Somewhere he is rubbing up against the fantastic machinery of Will’s mind, warm and safe under the coiled mass of thoughts and memories and impulses that comprise Will; he has found a hiding place and he will never need to hide again, safe amid warm thoughts like *mine* and *always* and *not alone, not going to be alone*. It is spring everywhere in his mind. “The pang of incompleteness.”

“What it feels like being put back together,” Will says.

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “I did not know he was a literalist.”

*

He sleeps fitfully; wakes to Will watching him, stroking a hand through his hair. He is a drenched, writhing tangle of need; his hair is awry; fog is forever descending between his mouth and his brain; he whimpers pitifully when Will withdraws the hand. The indignity of it would be unbearable if he saw himself mirrored in any other eyes but Will’s.

Will kisses him, on the forehead, like a benediction. He can feel warmth stirring on Will’s side of the bond, something he hasn’t dared to put words to. Wonder and lust and possession all commingled. The scent of it coaxes another tide of slick from him; he is astonished his body still has the capacity to *want* to this degree. Will looks a little astonished. He slides three fingers into Hannibal, exquisite torment, twists them, nudges them deliberately against the spot that makes Hannibal gasp and writhe, then withdraws them, licks the slick off them.

Hannibal whines and shoves his hips back, presenting. He feels another wash of it, the strange new sensation of Will’s eyes on him when he is like this.

“Look at you,” Will says, a reverent whisper; Hannibal has never felt so obscene; he has passed the point of observing himself doing this, alarmed at what he will permit, what he will demand; he is simply demanding; his body is crying out to be used and taken and mounted, and he is one with his body. “My omega in heat, presenting for me.”

He can feel the brush of Will’s stubble against his thigh as Will licks a long deliberate stripe up it, catching the slick on his tongue. “Drenched in slick,” Will says, “begging for it.”

Hannibal shuts his eyes. A shudder passes through his whole body. He feels more than naked; he feels skinned. Will plants a slow line of kisses up his back; it’s too gentle, not what he needs. He needs Will pounding into him with claiming force; Will’s handprints on his body. Will kisses his way up to his neck, licks the bitemark with satisfaction. A tremor passes

through Hannibal. He is shaking. He is going to shake apart. “I didn’t think,” Will breathes into his ear, like a confession, “I was *allowed* to want this; I never imagined I would be allowed to have it.” Will nips at his earlobe. “Look at what you made yourself for me,” Will breathes. “God, look at you.”

Hannibal’s eyes fall shut. “Look,” Will says, insistently; and he gets a flash of what Will wants him to see, his body is limned in gold, the map of a beloved country, from the shape of Will’s mouth etched on his throat, the submissive curve of his neck, the slick coating his thighs, the suggestive arch of his powerful back. *And it’s you in there*, Will thinks, the thought is impossibly warm, *you let yourself be this for me. You became this so you could be mine. I know what it means to you. Do you have any idea what it means to me.* “Do you see?”

“I see,” Hannibal says, he isn’t sure if he says it aloud. Will kisses him on the throat, over the bitemark, and then he feels the sweet unbearable relief of Will mounting him, Will sliding home inside him.

“Bedelia said you were born without a skin,” Will says, “that you had to wear armor to touch or be touched.” Hannibal clutches his hand, brings it up to his heart. “But you took off all your armor so that I could touch you.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

“You love me,” Will says. Hannibal can feel him starting to believe it. Like he wants to believe it more than anything in the world. “Whatever else you are, you’re mine.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says. “Always.”

“I love you,” Will says, through his teeth, “so damn much.”

“Will,” Hannibal gasps; Will kisses him on the bitemark. It feels like being kissed on a part of him that can’t be touched. He tangles his fingers in Will’s hair to keep him there as he comes, in a blinding flash, clenching down around Will’s knot like his body wants to keep them tied forever. *Mine,* he hears, unbelievably satisfied, *mine, he’s mine, God forgive me.* He’s not sure whose thought it is.

*

They settle together, Will curled comfortably against him, mouth buried in his neck. “Contrapasso,” Hannibal murmurs.

“Sin and atonement mixed,” Will says. “Everything mixed.”

“Blurred,” Hannibal says. “You and I. You said this was what you were afraid of.”

“The alternative,” Will says, “was worse.” He looks at Hannibal, seriously. “I know what it means to you to have to be like this,” he says. “How much you hate surrendering control.”

“I have never been in control,” Hannibal says. “Not with you.”

“You let me change you,” Will says. “Do you regret it?”

“Do you feel regret?”

“No,” Will says. “Neither yours nor mine.” He smiles. “I can see you now.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says.

“It’s beautiful,” Will says.

“Then perhaps I have changed you as well,” Hannibal says.

“Or perhaps you have always known me just as well as I knew myself.”

“You have always known yourself,” Hannibal says. “You preferred not to.”

Will frowns, traces a finger over his chest, through the scrub of coarse hairs there. “We’re past doubts. Past recriminations. Impossible to say now what I would have said or thought. It’s done. I couldn’t lose you. I wanted you more than I wanted to be certain of myself.”

“Then your experience is an exact mirror of my own,” Hannibal says. He sighs. Will settles his head on his chest.

“I never thought I’d have a mate.”

“Your isolation had become understandable to you.”

“Yours hadn’t,” Will says. He pauses, tasting the words for it. “I remember, after the first time, on your desk— when I smelled the hope on you.” Hannibal waits for him to put a word to it. “Like a stream — choked under rubble and weeds.”

“It surprised you.”

“I thought it was a trick,” Will says. “Something like that, alive down there after all this time. I couldn’t believe that you would have room in yourself for hope.” His mouth twists, wry. “You smelled so human.”

“Do you believe I am human now?” Hannibal inquires. As they have been talking Will’s fingers have traversed his chest and made their way down to the juncture of his legs where his cock is stirring; Will sits up on an elbow, looks thoughtfully down at him and then takes it in hand as he considers, begins to stroke from base to tip.

“Excessively,” he says. He smiles. “The thought that under all your armor you still were -- hoping for your alpha.”

“I was not consciously hoping,” Hannibal says; his voice twists a little on the words and Will repeats the motion that provoked it. “The thought of being dispossessed of myself was a terrible one. You enraged me.”

“I frightened you,” Will says. “Because I made you feel like this.” The fingers of Will’s other hand trace affectionately over the bitemark and rise to Hannibal’s lips; Hannibal draws one into his mouth and sucks, looking up at Will. “How do you think I felt?” Will says.

“Possessive,” Hannibal says. It’s a deliberately submissive posture, leaning back on his elbows, gazing up at Will, keeping his hips from thrusting up into Will’s hand.

Will grins. “Damn right.” He gives another tug and then removes the hand entirely, scoots back so his head is level with Hannibal’s belly, plants a kiss on it, and takes him in his mouth.

“*Alpha*,” Hannibal groans, both deliberate and not, and he can feel Will’s exasperated fond chuckle in his whole body. Will’s fingers slide under his thigh and then into him, first one, then another, then a third; he can’t help making a throaty, needy noise. He can feel Will’s satisfaction on the other side of the bond, everything his scent is proclaiming, you’re infuriatingly perfect, I love having you like this.

Hannibal slides a hand into Will’s curls and grips; Will’s fingers tease at the right spot inside him and prompt a swift gush of slick. Will pulls off, leans in to lick up as much of it as he can, and then takes him in his mouth again. Hannibal must make another sound. He must make several. He can tell from Will’s scent that all the sounds are obscene.

Will pulls off and looks up at him.

“Please,” Hannibal gasps, suddenly it’s not enough, he needs Will’s knot.

Will clambers back up his body, kisses him quickly on the bondmark, like he can’t bear not to, slides into him with a relieved gasp. “Oh God,” he says. Their bodies move together, needy and swift; they pant against each other’s mouths. “I wish I could live inside you,” Will breathes. “Pleasing you feels better than anything in the world.”

“Yes,” Hannibal says, in lieu of anything else. “Yes.” He’s clutching desperately at Will’s back, clawing at it; there are going to be marks. Will growls with satisfaction.

“Us loving each other,” Will says. “Isn’t that strange?”

“Strange,” Hannibal says, “but natural.”

*

He returns to himself by degrees; every time they come together it feels as though Will is pouring him back into himself, giving him the pieces back. One afternoon he looks over at his sleeping alpha and thinks, that's all of them, except the one I can never get back, now. I'm as whole as I am like to be.

He kisses Will quickly on the mouth; Will stirs but doesn't wake; he stretches, leaves the bed for the first time, gets dressed and heads to the kitchen. He will make breakfast. He must make arrangements for Abigail, for Will's dogs. They must be leaving soon.

*

The ocean laps at the foot of the bluff. Hannibal stands in a clean sweater and slacks on the edge of it; he can feel without quite intending to that Will is approaching from the house with two glasses of wine, that Will is pleased and tired, that there is something ineffably satisfying for Will about walking towards him in particular. Something Will treasures and is making a

place of honor for in his mind. Unused endearments hover around him in Will's mind like a cloud of fireflies.

"Hello," Will says, "omega."

Hannibal tilts his head obligingly; Will kisses him on the neck, over the bondmark, quick and hot and possessive. "Hello," he says.

"We're leaving soon," Will says.

"Yes," Hannibal says. "We are."

"How are you?" Will says.

"You don't have to ask," Hannibal says.

"I know," Will says. "I can feel you moving around below decks ."

"Is that what it feels like?" Hannibal asks. He takes the wine glass. He feels, unaccountably, like blushing; there is a warmth to the scrutiny that feels tangible, like sunlight on his skin.

"You want to know what I'm thinking all the time," Will says.

"Does that surprise you?"

"Surprise me?" Will says. He takes a sip of wine. Hannibal can't help looking at him, framed against the sunset, breeze running its fingers through his curls. Will ducks his head, bashfully. "No." Then Will looks up at him, pointedly. "I didn't know this was how it felt."

Hannibal looks at him. "What?"

"Being in your head," Will says. *Being loved,* he hears; there's a spark of warmth along the bond.

"No," Hannibal says. *We cannot see another person unless we love them,* he thinks. He catches Will's amusement, watches a retort form on his lips.

"You see more of me than is there," Will says.

Hannibal looks at him; superimposed on the Will standing there in his button-down he can see a hundred other Wills, pacing and talking and pulling faces, some of them are drenched in blood. He thinks of the two of them, both bloody, both resplendent. He can feel Will wanting to hate these glimpses of himself but not quite hating them; there are so many things Will would hate if he did not recognize them as *his*. "Perhaps," he says.

Will retaliates, looks back at him; Will's eyes give him back a hundred editions of himself, he is demure and suited; he is messy, debauched; he is cooking with his sleeves rolled up; he is sitting in a leather chair, discoursing on God; he is a monster; he is a little boy placing a snail carefully into a garden while fireflies swirl around his head. Hannibal feels sweet terror grip

him by the heart. But every one of the visions is suffused with warmth, flooded with light. “I see you, too,” Will says.

Hannibal kisses him, once, firmly, on the mouth. Will traces his thumb along the bitemark as they kiss, like he's finding himself on a map. Here is my omega; here we are. “I’d like to show you Florence, Will.”

Chapter End Notes

finally!!! thank you so much to everyone who has read and left comments! your encouragement has made the journey from zero to ... almost 50,000 words of omega!Hannibal porn & feelings a very pleasant one, and I hope you enjoyed the conclusion!

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